

THE LENINIST



CPGB

Fifth Conference of the Leninists

Declaration to the Working Class of Great Britain

THE EURO Executive Committee, meeting over the first weekend of September, unanimously voted to recommend to their December 8-9 42nd Congress that all reference to "communism" be dropped in the renaming of their organisation.

That the Euros are completing their transformation into an openly bourgeois trend at this moment in time comes as no surprise. Due to the ignominious collapse of bureaucratic socialism and 'official communism' in Eastern Europe and the counterrevolutionary process unfolding in the USSR, the world has been plunged into a period of ideological reaction. The leaders and propagandists of capitalism are brimming with confidence. They have triumphantly declared that communism and Marxism-Leninism - capitalism's mortal enemy - is dead. For the moment at least, they therefore no longer need tame 'communists' like the Euros.

Neither Marxism-Leninism

nor communism is dead. Marxism-Leninism lives because it is true. Only by using the scientific method first developed by Karl Marx can we really understand the present 1914-type general crisis of bureaucratic socialism and the 'official' world communist movement. Only by using Marxism can we understand that, far from the west's victory in the Cold War ending capitalism's antagonistic contradictions, they are growing ever more pronounced. And only using Marxism can we end capitalism: a system which, in spite of its claims that it will bring peace and plenty, will only bring mass unemployment, starvation and the threat of nuclear holocaust.

Capitalism is a decadent system which long ago outlived its usefulness. Communism still represents the future of humanity.

The Euros have never had the slightest legitimacy in using the proud name of our Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain. Only a disciplined party steeled in Marxist-Leninist ide-

ology deserves to be called the Communist Party.

In the light of the Euros' decision to change their name, our organisation will no longer call itself the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*). *The Leninist* will remain the central organ of our Party but we no longer need a suffix in order to distinguish ourselves from the Euro traitors. From now on we will simply call ourselves the Communist Party of Great Britain. That name must not be abandoned, to be buried by the Euros or taken over by one or the other crisis ridden 'official communist' rumps.

Our main task remains re-forging the CPGB. Although we have the name of the Party, the Party itself has been liquidated. This situation has to be, and will be, reversed. At the moment, however, our organisation re-

mains painfully weak and, in most areas of the country, non-existent. Therefore, in order to indicate what stage we are at, and what tasks we have ahead of ourselves, the leadership of our

organisation will use the name Provisional Central Committee.

There is clearly a burning need for a strong Communist Party. Without a strong Party the working class is nothing, with it, everything. That is why our central overriding aim remains re-forging the Communist Party of Great Britain. The CPGB will not be re-forged through uniting the various opportunist fragments of 'official communism'. No, a strong Communist Party will only be built on the solid foundations of Marxism-Leninism and through taking the consistent organisational and ideological struggle we have been waging since November 1981 to new heights. A landmark in this will be the coming publication of a draft programme of the CPGB around which genuine communist forces can be won and trained.

The programme will be finalised, and the provisional nature of our leadership ended, at a refounding congress of the CPGB which we will call as soon as the basis for such a

qualitative development has been laid.

Now that the Euro organisation has given up pretending to have anything to do with communism, this conference of Leninists instructs it to hand over all Party property, files and records. The Euros have betrayed all the principles on which our Party was founded in July 1920, everything that was good and fine in our Party's history and tradition. Their right over Party property, files and records exists only in bourgeois law.

Any remaining communists in the Euro organisation or the other 'official communist' rumps should now act under the leadership and discipline of the CPGB. We call upon these comrades, along with all those communists who have left or been driven out of the CPGB by opportunism, to join us in the great work that lies ahead. Together we can build the strong Communist Party our class needs.



QUITE frankly, after eleven and a half years as an almost monarchical prime minister, and with a Gulf War on the horizon, I expected the Iron Lady to fight a fourth general election as leader of the Tory Party. Heseltine had other ideas, and after she failed by a mere four votes to win outright, Thatcher had her cabinet lining up like Caesar's assassins telling her to go. Uncharacteristically, she bowed to the majority view. Heseltine's five years in the making palace coup was ready for the second round.

There can be no doubt that Thatcher has earned a place in history - not only as Britain's first female and longest serving 20th century peacetime prime minister, but as a ruthless fighter for her adopted class, the imperialist bourgeoisie. After defeating the Argentinian enemy without and cold bloodedly sending down the Belgrano, she turned on the enemy within. It took a year, millions of pounds, ten thousand arrests and the death of two miners to beat the NUM, but beat it she did.

Thatcher's politics were a break with the social democratic-type consensus politics of the 1950s and 60s that meant a return to the Victorian values of Manchester school 19th century liberalism. This "there is no such thing as society" neo-Malthusianism justified vicious attacks on the working class, in particular the lower and middle sections.

Unemployment doubled, homelessness quadrupled and cardboard cities mushroomed. The mentally ill found themselves turfed out onto the streets, social services were cut to the bone and a whole layer of youth suffered lumpenisation. All of these barbaric horrors were perpetrated in the name of reversing Britain's long term decline. As we know, it did not work. Britain's decline relative to its major imperialist competitors continued, and inflation, unemployment and economic stagnation are back with a vengeance.

However, the immediate cause of Thatcher's political demise was none of this. Two main factors combined to undermine support for her among Tory MPs: Europe, and the poll tax.

Thatcher's backward looking intransigence did not go with the flow of history. For Britain's capitalists, Europe is the future: both the City and industry could not afford to be marginalised, and made this known in no uncertain terms through the 'usual' channels.

The poll tax was equally identified with Thatcher as was opposition to Europe. But whereas opposition to her over Europe built up from above, opposition to the poll tax built up from below, in the form of 14 million non-payers and huge anti-poll tax demonstrations. Indeed, the extent of the opposition had a whole layer of the Tory Party terrified - not least, terrified that they would lose the next general election and their seats because of it.

In spite of this the ruling class said a reluctant goodbye to Thatcher. She served them well. As far as this class is concerned, the key thing now is to heal the splits in the Tory Party - their preferred party of government - under John Major, and get on with the class war. Heseltine, Hurd and Major might have broadly represented respectively the left, centre and right of the Tory Party. Yet, showing how the political agenda has been rewritten under Thatcher's leadership, they all promised, with the exception of Europe (this dumping of anti-European xenophobia might create a space for a British version of the Republican Party in Germany, or Le Pen's National Front in France) and the poll tax, to carry on Thatcherism without Thatcher. Clearly Major - Thatcher's chosen heir - will do exactly that.

While one can understand why the ruling class is sorry to see Thatcher go, it is strange to hear so many on the left of the Labour Party making the same noises. After monotonously shouting 'Maggie, Maggie, Maggie, out, out, out', for a decade, they would secretly have liked her to stay on till the next general election.

The reason for this paradox is simple. Latest opinion polls show that, with Major, the Tories would beat Labour. For them this is a tragedy. For us, it is secondary.

The Labour left, and groups such as the SWP, have personalised politics throughout the 1980s, concentrating their propaganda on the Tories and their leader, not the capitalist system. By implication, Labour is the alternative. It is not. The Kinnockite Labour Party has gone through great policy review convulsions so that it can share the same essentially Thatcherite agenda as Major. If elected, the results will be Thatcher-type economics and Thatcher-type attacks on the working class by Labour. The answer is clear: fight whoever wins!

The Editor

Six month subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £8; Europe £11; Rest of World £13 (airmail £20.50). Annual subscription rates: Britain and Ireland £16 (Institutions £26); Europe £22 (Institutions £32); Rest of World £26, airmail £41 (Institutions £36, airmail £46). Back issues: Issues 1-6 (theoretical journal) £1 each plus 25p p&p. Other issues 50p plus p&p. Cheques payable to November Publications Ltd. Printed by: Multiline Systems Ltd, 22-24 Powell Road, London E5 (081-985-3753). Published by: November Publications Ltd, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX. Copyright December 1990 ISSN 0262-1649

LETTERS

United we fall

"The question arises - what now for communists? It is a question which concerns all Marxist-Leninists" (Eric Trevett, general secretary of the New Communist Party, *The New Worker*, August 14 1990). The NCP's call for a united front between communists, rising as it does above sectarian and, hopefully, careerist considerations, is a call which should be welcomed by all communists. It is also one which we believe will be opposed by some opportunists, careerists, and those on the left of the communist movement who have sectarian notions about rebuilding the Communist Party.

The re-establishment of a single communist organisation in Britain can only be achieved on the general principles of Marxism-Leninism, which takes into consideration the present crisis of world communism and is able to put forward the correct scientific explanation of it.

We believe that through the policy of the united front, involving full freedom of debate and the exchange of views, combined with complete unity in action around practical political issues, it will be possible for all communists to lay the foundation for the rebuilding of the Communist Party in Britain. The united front policy is not a substitute for the Communist Party, but can help lay the foundation for one.

No one in the genuinely communist and anti-imperialist camp would oppose such an outcome. On the other hand, the imperialists themselves and their middle class accomplices in the working class movement would abhor the emergence of a principled Communist Party. Previously the NCP, then the CPB, set up their own "parties". We hope that *The Leninist* will not pursue the path of sectarianism.

We cannot and should not stop the Euros from liquidating themselves, but we can and must stop them from liquidating the Communist Party. It is for this reason that we support the NCP call for communist unity against liquidation. We believe that *The Leninist* can play an important role in the struggle to rebuild the Communist Party on the basis of fighting for a united front between communists. For our part, we aim to make this our central campaigning issue at communist meetings and events. Like *The Leninist* and the NCP, we call on all communists to rebuild the anti-imperialist Communist Party in Britain. Forward to the united front!

Partisan
London

Alan Merrik replies:

We see no evidence that the unity proposals of the NCP are principled. Like all remnants of 'official communism', the NCP is in crisis because of its political prostitution, lack of theory and bureaucratic internal regime. Nevertheless we would gladly meet with representatives of its leadership. We would certainly be willing to organise an open meeting on the question of communist unity with it, although, going on its past record, the NCP will neither meet nor debate with us. As to Partisan, if this group (which split from the now defunct Proletarian, which itself split from the NCP) wants to enter into discussion with us, we would sincerely welcome it. Indeed we have repeatedly called - in vain - for discussions with communist groups on the vital question of reforging our CPGB.

Poll tax

On Saturday November 25 the All Britain Anti-Poll Tax Federation held

its second annual conference in Manchester. The Federation issued four statements, to which each union could send one amendment; to issue a completely fresh statement replacing the committee's four has been condemned as "wrecking". This manoeuvre, plus the limited time of two hours for discussion, and the ruling that only the national committee can amend the constitution, made the whole conference a farce.

Yet, despite the bureaucratic practices of Militant, out of 1200 delegates, some 520 voted for platforms in opposition to the leadership, namely those of 3D and the SWP.

Two main features stand out in the four Federation statements. Firstly, self congratulations, as in the blatantly lying statement that "The Federation has played a decisive role in the launching, sustaining and development of the non-payment campaign".

In actual fact it has built a bureaucratic machine on the backs of the 10 million workers who - in the overwhelming majority of cases, without reference to the Federation - have refused to pay. This type of smug back slapping was very much in evidence at the Manchester conference, where it was actually claimed that the ABAPTF was responsible for the downfall of Thatcher! Perhaps Heseltine and Howe are closet members?

The second notable feature of the statements was the cringing before the TUC and Labour Party leaders, whom they beg to lead the struggle against the poll tax. Militant have thoroughly exposed themselves: they are Labourites, not revolutionaries; as proven by their 'naming names' outburst after Trafalgar Square and their general fawning before the police.

As readers will know, the CPGB has been targeted in the scab rag *Daily Express* for our call for workers' defence corps to defend our demonstrations against police assault. On October 22 it reported that "detailed information of probable ringleaders from groups such as Class War and the extreme Leninist Faction will be at the heart of the [police] probe".

What would be the attitude of the Militant leaders of ABAPTF to such police attacks on our organisation? Would they defend us? Or would they again "name names"? One has only to ask the question in order to know the answer.

The mandate for revolutionary workers is clear: the fight for a genuine democratic workers mass movement can only be conducted through waging a relentless political struggle against the reformist leadership of Militant. Tom Cowan
Secretary, Tooting APTU (personal capacity)

which workers' organisations are crushed and democratic niceties dispensed with. Thus feudal reaction, chattel slavery, religious fundamentalism flourish alongside space age technology.

Workers of Iraq have everything to gain from the defeat of western imperialism, but nothing to gain from seeing Saddam Hussein as a vehicle for that defeat. If they overthrow him tomorrow they would still have to confront imperialism, and this would be true whether we defined Iraq as a semi-colony or imperialist; and if Iraq wins, Hussein would still have to be overthrown.

The logic of our position is revolutionary defeatism; ie, workers in Britain and in Iraq need to overthrow their own rulers. Preparations for this are more important than the immediate outcome of the war, since if the question of power is not resolved, the war will only pave the way for yet more conflict. The central question is the unity of the working class and its political independence. Hence slogans like the united socialist Middle East. Raising the question of the Kurds challenges Iran, Iraq, Turkey, etc.

The practical expression of revolutionary defeatism is a political struggle at home against those who support the west or the UN - all the Labour traitors. Hence we are not willing to join a committee built on a 'troops out' basis alone.

Mike Martin
Anti-Imperialist Action, Sheffield

Dual

Excuse my belatedness, but I wish to make a brief reply to comrade Merrik's letter (*The Leninist* No94) to round off my argument.

Comrade Merrik sums up his dilemma in not understanding my argument re the Soviet bureaucracy being of a dual nature, ie both reactionary and progressive, by his obvious lack of understanding of the dialectic of the unity of opposites, when he writes in the above letter: "This ... duality ... makes about as much sense as arguing one can move forwards and backwards at the same time". But you can do so, comrade Merrik! And it is the dialectical sense, not the formal logical sense, to which you obviously refer.

The unity of opposites, that is the existence of opposites at the same time, is an elementary dialectical and scientific principle. One cannot exist without one's opposite; it is a precondition for one's existence. One moves forward and backward at the same time when one walks contrary to the earth's motion, or walks up an escalator going in the opposite direction, in the same dialectical sense as moving while motionless in a car, or the act of dying being created with the creation of life - neither can exist without the other.

If Lenin can write in the same dialectical sense, that "imperialism is moribund capitalism, capitalism in transition to socialism" (CW, Vol 23, p107), then surely it is not senseless to write that the Soviet bureaucracy, while moving back to capitalist restoration (reactionary), is (or was?) progressive in its defence and development of the world's socialised economy, irrespective of whether it was carried out consciously or willingly.

P Conlon
South London

Note: Letters have been shortened due to lack of space. For political security we have changed certain names, addresses and details.

WRITE OR RING

If you wish to reply to any of these letters, raise questions or comment on articles in *The Leninist* please write to The Editor, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX, or phone 071-431-3135.

WORKERS THEATRE

Theatre as a weapon



The second annual general meeting of the Workers Theatre Movement took place on October 24 in central London. The forces gathered reflected the strengths and weaknesses of the previous year's work.

PROBABLY the major weakness of the WTM over the year was that, in spite of our increase in activity, we have not placed anywhere near enough emphasis on promoting ourselves in the workers' movement. This is primarily a problem of administration and therefore perfectly capable of being solved with methodical work.

But the greatest strength of the WTM is shown by our ability to keep going and grow in this period of reaction. Not for us the approach of so many in the theatre - to pile effort into a project and then find there is nowhere to go after the 'last night show'. Our intention from the very beginning has been to find an approach whereby we can carry out steady, regular work and build the movement which can genuinely serve the working class in struggle.

Many people have been through the ranks of WTM since its inception in the early summer of 1989, but the ones that matter are those who have recognised the strength of the politics which underpin it - the politics of the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB and its central organ *The Leninist*. That 'hard core' is developing and makes possible the realisation of our ambitious aims for 1991 and beyond.

The degree to which WTM has developed since the first AGM in September 1989 was shown by the need to revise our manifesto to embrace the

new areas of work which have been taken up. The original manifesto really only dealt with the short agitprop sketches and did not allow for such innovations as *The Internationale* - our monthly political cabaret - or large scale theatre projects like our highly successful production of *Waiting For Lefty* by Clifford Odets.

In order to draw all activities within the scope of our manifesto and to make clear that our aim is to utilise art in all its forms to serve the revolution, an updated version was presented to the AGM. The key change reads: "WTM consciously embraces all forms of artistic expression that help us to expose the exploitative reality beneath the surface of class society. The essential core of our work is agitprop, a flexible, mobile form of theatre which can be performed under any conditions. The street, strike meeting or mass demonstration are for us a stage. Our audience is the working class in struggle." The full manifesto will appear in the next issue of *Workers Theatre*, which is due out soon.

In terms of street work, WTM has consolidated its position over the past year, without taking any really major strides forward. There has been some development in terms of technique and writing, but we have yet to really go to the working class with our theatre weapon. The poll tax, being an attack on the whole of our class, is an ideal

subject for a sketch suited to performance at street markets, etc but this has yet to be carried through. The current version of 'Axe The Tax' was performed most recently at the October 20 London demonstration. It is a scathing but humorous attack on the Labour Party's position, especially the despicable role played by Militant since the battle of Trafalgar. It is an excellent sketch for performing at demos and meetings made up of activists, but is perhaps too 'hard' for more general streetwork. Primarily, though, we are only going to find out what works for a working class audience, and what does not, by getting out there and doing it.

One of the great successes of the past year has been the establishment of *The Internationale* cabaret. It, too, has had its highs and lows, but we are intent on generating the publicity, atmosphere and talent which will create the momentum needed to build a regular audience that is active because it is participating in the event.

Combining this with our plans for a quarterly *Workers Theatre* paper as a means to developing our theory and our critique of bourgeois theatre, three full-scale productions in 1991 and, last but not least, the recent purchase of five megaphones, WTM is all set to really make its mark before its third AGM.

Tom Cormack

Fight censorship

One feature of the present period is the drive by certain sections of the ruling class to impose censorship on political and artistic expression.

SCULPTOR and WTM member Russell DeRosario recently fell foul of Luton Tory MP and would be censor, Graham Bright. DeRosario had two sculptures on show at an exhibition in Luton Central Library, to which Bright took exception. One is a piece called *The harder they come*. It consists of a large beetle figure with a Thatcher mask and a phallus made from a copy of the *Financial Times* rapier Britain. The other is an attack on US imperialism's role in central

America, using an image of Che Guevara and showing how condoms are used as a means to smuggle drugs.

This was too much for Bright. Without seeing them, he fired a complaint off to the head of Bedfordshire County Council Leisure Department. It instantly ordered the removal of the sculptures. The WTM responded equally swiftly and called a protest picket of the library to demand the reinstatement of the sculptures and to nail Graham Bright and his lackeys as McCarthyites. WTM, of course, stands

against all forms of censorship, but it was the anti-communist political censorship which we wanted to expose.

The sculptures were displayed on the picket and the response from the people of Luton who saw them there was overwhelmingly positive. The whole controversy was widely reported in the local media: press, TV and radio, it also received coverage at a national level: a front page article in *The Independent* and a headline in the *Daily Mirror* about "Maggie the alien" and "kinky sex"!

IN STRUGGLE

The two largest civil service unions, the CPSA and NUCPS, have recently balloted their members over plans to merge. Although the NUCPS have voted in favour of the merger by a majority of around 3 to 1, CPSA is rerunning its ballot. This is not because of any organisational problem, but because the CPSA 'moderate' bureaucracy is investigating allegations of "irregularities"; ie, returned, unopened ballot papers. Most rank and file activists in the CPSA quite correctly believe this to be a stall by the bureaucracy; a response to the small but clear majority for merger. These "irregularities" allow the whole process to be re-run, probably by a postal ballot. This would not allow full debate over the issue and would increase the chances of the CPSA's bureaucrats achieving the result they want. Revealingly, Militant supporters on the CPSA executive have lined up with the Marion Chambers-led right wing, because it too is against merger. Whatever the final outcome, rank and file activists throughout the civil service should place no trust in these leaders, who resort to bureaucratic manoeuvre when they do not like the result of a democratic vote. Whether or not there is a merger, rank and file activists in the CPSA and NUCPS must strengthen their links in the workplaces. GP

"The best solidarity meeting with Cuba this year", was how Roberto D'Armas, first secretary of the Cuban Embassy, summed up the meeting in Stoke Newington Town Hall, London, on November 10 organised by the Union of Turkish Progressives in Britain to celebrate the 73rd anniversary of the October Revolution. Under the title "Solidarity with Cuba", the meeting drew an enthusiastic audience of communists and anti-imperialists from Turkey, Britain, Iran and elsewhere to hear a range of speakers emphasise the need to repay the debt of solidarity by rallying in defence of frontline socialist Cuba, as Gorbachev's market orientated USSR pulls out the plug of economic aid. From January 1, the Soviet Union will only trade with Cuba in hard currency and at world market prices. Speaking from the platform, comrade Jack Conrad of the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB emphasised that to turn words of solidarity into deeds necessitated "that we succeed in re-forging our Communist Party in Britain". IF



■ Imperialism and its stooge Gorbachev threaten the ideals and gains of the Cuban revolution

The continual erosion of student rights has reached a head at the Polytechnic of North London. Polytechnic management has withdrawn funding from the student union and suspended payment of the elected union executive. This was its reaction to the election to the executive of two members previously expelled from college for fighting student loans. Management expelled these students and now refused to recognise the student elected union executive until the leadership backed down unconditionally. This is because, constitutionally, union membership is only open to students at PNL, which, since their expulsion, the two are not. The PNLSU leadership bowed to this pressure and accepted the imposition of two replacements by management. A scab union executive was - and is - in place in PNL, against the wishes of the membership. As a response, a union meeting was called on November 13, which the scab executive refused to recognise. On the day, security moved in to bolt up the building, including union offices, and barred many students from the building. Three lines were argued in the meeting: one, that the case should be taken to the courts; another, for immediate occupation against the attacks; a third, put forward by the SWP, was essentially a stalling motion, calling for a lobby and a fresh meeting the next week. This was a dead end: the meeting was itself 'unconstitutional' and a lobby of management changes nothing. This motion was passed, which in effect demobilised the largest union meeting for two years, which should have moved into direct occupation and fought to build its action within the poly and in others. Anything less is tokenism. LA

Over the top



After a decade of Thatcherite stability, bourgeois politics are facing a period of instability. Good. But this does not mean everything is going to be okay now for the working class. It will not. The struggle must continue. We will not be content with the resignation of Thatcher, or even the defeat of her whole party, like so many on the left. We must use division in the enemy's ranks as our opportunity to further the struggle to get rid of capitalism, lock, stock and barrel. This paper has never fetishised this or that individual, our paper has always fought capitalism. That is something our readers fully understand and why they are always ready to come forward with support. Our £600 monthly fighting fund went over the top in October by a healthy £45, and so far November stands at £510. Special thanks to comrades AS, MM, JC, RE and TR.

Bypassing capitalism: separating the wheat from the chaff

The disintegration of socialism in the Soviet Union has not only precipitated the collapse of socialism throughout Eastern Europe; it has also thrown into crisis revolutionary regimes throughout the world. There is no better time to examine and reconsider the theory of socialist orientation



Vietnam showed that only working class leadership has any interest in socialism

FOR LENIN it was "self evident" that the final victory of communism relied on the working class in the advanced countries of the world. Only they could complete the world revolution so splendidly begun by the working class of Russia with the assistance of the toiling masses in the backward countries, above all, in his own time, those of Asia. The transition to communism cannot be accomplished, he argued, by the "vanguard alone". It was necessary to rouse the masses in backward countries like China and India and make them into the *subject of history* rather than the *object of history*, into an *independent force* in the struggle against imperialism and for their own liberation.

The existence of proletarian power in Russia was a powerful factor here. It could act as a focal point making it possible to unite east and west. Soviet Russia was a beacon of genuine emancipation and social progress in state form. Because of this and its ability to give "unselfish cultural aid" it won the sympathy of the hundreds of millions languishing under feudal, semi feudal or colonial servitude. These peoples looked to the Soviet Republic for inspiration and help, and in turn the leaders of the Soviet Republic did everything they could to bring about the closest alliance between the world proletariat and the national and colonial liberation movements.

However, supporting the struggle against imperialism did not mean the communist forces in the backward countries falling in behind these movements if they were led by Islamic reactionaries or the national bourgeoisie, no matter how few in number the communists were. There could be *no support* for Islamic or Pan Arabist reactionaries and only *conditional support* for the national bourgeoisie.

Communists in the oppressed countries had to march separately, strike together against the main enemy. They should give *no support* to the *policy* of the national bourgeoisie. As Lenin argued in his work *On the right of nations to self determination*, support for the bourgeois-led national liberation movement would be given only to the extent that the national bourgeoisie fought imperialism. Communists would oppose the national bourgeoisie of the oppressed nation in so far as it inevitably stood for its "own bourgeois nationalism"; definitely there could be no toleration of the "strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation."

In fact the essence of Lenin's position amounted to a strategy for a world wide version or extension of the October Revolution; *viz* a world revolutionary alliance of the proletariat and peasantry under the leadership of the Communist International. That is why, in his report on the national and colonial question at the Second Congress of the Comintern in July 1920, he insisted that, notwithstanding all the difficulties, it was essential in backward countries - where there was no, or virtually no, proletariat - to fight for revolution through building peasants' or toilers' soviets. These organisations "of the exploited, are a weapon which can be employed, not only in capitalist countries but also in countries with pre-capitalist relations, and ... it is the absolute duty of Communist Parties and of elements prepared to form

Communist Parties, everywhere to conduct propaganda in favour of peasants' Soviets or of working peoples' Soviets, this to include backward and colonial countries" (Lenin CW, Vol 31, p243).

Moreover, as Lenin went on to argue, through the victory of the soviet system these countries could go "through certain stages of development, to communism, without having to pass through the capitalist stage" (*Ibid*, p244).

In reply to those who insisted that capitalism must mechanically precede socialism, Lenin said that it would be "mistaken to assume that the backward peoples must inevitably go through the capitalist stage of development." (*Ibid*). This was of course dependent on the strength of existing socialism. If socialism is strong then these opportunities are greatly increased.

Historical experience has confirmed this, beginning with Mongolia, a country which only 70 years ago was so backward in its development that it had not reached the level of early medieval Britain. The vast majority of the population were nomadic herdsmen and industry amounted to just one mine and a printing press. Yet within three years of its formation, in 1921, the Mongolian Peoples Revolutionary Party had led the masses in the overthrow of the old clerical/feudal regime and established a revolutionary government in Urga.

After the bourgeois democratic tasks were carried out - abolition of serfdom, confiscation of cattle from feudal lords, cancellation of usury debts, establishment of national finance, credit and trade systems etc - the objective and subjective conditions made it possible for the revolution to grow uninterruptedly into its second (socialist) phase.

The objective conditions which made this possible were the nature of its northern neighbour, the Soviet Union. The subjective conditions were created by the leading role of the MPRP - a Leninist party of the new type established in the wake of the Great October Socialist Revolution, a party of the proletariat which, despite the small numbers in that class, was able to win the broad masses to the banner of socialist revolution.

Mongolia did not disprove the Marxist doctrine that socialism could only come through the leadership of the working class. What it proved was that the laws of social development operate not in a pure, national, form, but as a worldwide historical tendency. In the case of Mongolia, the USSR itself operated as the working class - for the likes of the SWP's leaders like Tony Cliff, an impossibility (the SWP fetishises to absurd lengths the self-liberation of the working class), but for genuine Marxists, hardly an intractable problem. We have always understood the transition to socialism to be fundamentally a result of the existence of a world economy, and therefore a worldwide process.

Nevertheless it cannot be denied that after the death of Lenin, and with the rise of the bureaucracy in the Soviet Union to the point where it was able to operate in its own narrow caste interests, the Leninist theory of world revolution was first watered down and then turned into its opposite. Under the influence of centrism, by the mid-1930s in both the advanced capitalist countries and the backward capitalist countries, the Communist Party of the

Soviet Union began to urge reform, not revolution.

In the advanced capitalist countries this eventually took the form of advocating that communists look to taking hold of the bourgeois state machine through parliament, as a vehicle for socialist transformation. In the backward capitalist countries, through the theory of socialist orientation the national bourgeoisie itself was presented as the revolutionary leadership that would usher in socialism.

The practice and theory of 'socialist orientation'

From the end of World War II, politics in the backward capitalist countries were dominated by the struggle for national liberation, ie, the demand for political independence. Given this pressure from below and US support for a controlled dismantling of the great colonial empires, by the mid-1960s the majority of countries in the world enjoyed formal political independence (in the overwhelming majority of cases this was won through a reformist transfer of power).

As the process of decolonisation unfolded, the Soviet Union sought to draw the newly free countries towards itself diplomatically. To achieve this, Khrushchev offered all sorts of incentives: vast economic and military aid, low interest loans and even medals (Nasser and his defence minister Abd al Hakim Amer were both awarded the decoration of 'Hero of the Soviet Union'). There was, of course, nothing wrong with this in itself; at a state level it is perfectly permissible for a socialist state to enter into temporary alliances with sections of the capitalist class. The problem was that it went hand in hand with imposing or encouraging a reformist programme on communists in these countries, enshrined in the theory of 'socialist orientation'.

Using this theory, Soviet leaders insisted that in backward capitalist countries (aligned to the Soviet Union) it was possible to resolve contradictions and go "from one qualitative state of society to another" through reforms, that "revolutionary processes" could be utilised "for the solution of revolutionary tasks" (A Sobelev, *Africa: national and social revolution*, Prague 1967, pp55-6). In plain English, class collaboration.

According to the theory of socialist orientation, the communist parties in these countries should not work for revolution but should tail the 'progressive' national bourgeoisie (diplomatically labelled 'revolutionary democrats' whenever the need arose), because it was they and their state that would, after a drawn out 'evolutionary process', introduce socialism, the first stage of communism. The masses went from being the subject of history to its object, and the need for a Communist Party was reduced to secondary importance or even discarded altogether: Khrushchev is reported to have warned the Communist Party of India that if Moscow was "forced to choose between Indian communism and progressive bourgeois nationalism it would choose the latter" (quoted by J Steele, *The limits of Soviet power* p164).

Not surprisingly the number of 'socialist orientated' countries reflected the relative economic power of the Soviet state. Under Khrushchevite 'high bureaucratic socialism' - when the Soviet economy was expanding at an annual rate of around 10% - the 'socialist orientated' countries (ie, countries closely aligned to the Soviet Union) included some very important backward capitalist countries like Algeria, Ghana, Indonesia and Egypt. Yet, as the Soviet Union was to find to its cost, these regimes often rested on a very narrow political base or were more interested in state capitalist development and securing access to the world market than in fighting for socialism.

Almost immediately after Khrushchev's fall from power in 1965, army coups removed Ben Bella in Algeria, Sukarno in Indonesia and Nkrumah in Ghana - his 'revolutionary' allies - and reorientated their countries back towards imperialism. Later, without any sort of change of government, Egypt did the same thing.

As a result of this, as well as the Soviet Union's relative economic decline throughout the 1970s,

Brezhnevite bureaucratic socialism was only able to boast about 20 far less important 'socialist orientated' countries. The speeches and greetings to the CPSU's 25th Congress in 1976 from those 'national democratic' parties in power included Algeria, Burma, Syria, Somalia and even Iraq (between 1973 and 1978 the Communist Party of Iraq sat in the Ba'athist dominated government, a party which they now brand as fascist).

Such claims were based on a definition of 'socialist orientation' that was so wide that it could, if need be, include any state with which the Soviet Union wished to secure a diplomatic alliance. A 'socialist orientated' country, it was said, was one that although newly free from the imperialist orbit (conveniently, as far as diplomatic considerations were concerned) could not proceed directly to 'full blooded' socialism owing to the low level of economic development (Iraq, Egypt, Algeria). Therefore they had to go through an intermediate historical period. This - the period of 'socialist orientation' - was where the foundations would be laid for the building of socialism.

As can be seen, Soviet sources went out of their way to deny the Leninist insistence on the socialist state form and proletarian programme of genuinely 'socialist orientated' countries:

"Socialist Orientation: the policy of some developing countries aimed at creating the necessary conditions for building the foundations of socialism. The social and economic basis of the socialist orientated countries is the state sector of the national economy, and the political basis, the transition of power into the hands of the revolutionary-democratic forces comprising the working class, the working peasantry, the intelligentsia and office employees and professional workers. The newly-free countries that have embarked upon the road of socialist orientation are carrying out deep-going social transformations such as the ousting of foreign monopolies that plunder their natural wealth, confiscation of the estates of feudal lords, allocation of land to all peasants, the establishment of peasants' co-operatives on a voluntary basis, the strengthening of the state-sector of the national economy, industrialisation and enactment of democratic legislation eliminating social inequality. The material well-being of the working people is being steadily improved, poverty and unemployment are being eliminated and public education is being developed on a large scale. Assistance rendered by the world socialist system is an important factor in the advance of developing countries along the road of socialist orientation" (*Political terms - a Short Guide*, Novosti 1982, p78).

What is described above naturally covers many of the measures that would be taken in a backward pre-capitalist country if it was to move directly, if slowly, towards socialism. However, it has to be said that in and of themselves many of the defining features of so-called 'socialist orientated' countries have little to do with socialism as such.

• **"Ousting foreign monopolies".** There is nothing inherently progressive about that. We remember that in the not too distant past the reactionary clerical regime in Iran ousted quite a few foreign monopolies. This was not done in the name of Marx or Lenin, or even Keynes for that matter, but in the name of Allah. Now Iraq is doing precisely the same thing in his so-called '19th province', not because of any kind of 'socialist orientation', rather because of the imperialistic orientation of his regime.

• **"The growing role of the state sector".** This is again meant to be proof of socialism (Militant Tendency suffers from the same problem - it considers both Syria and Burma to be "deformed workers' states"). Of course, there is nothing new or socialist about a weak capitalist ruling class (born from the army or bureaucratic elite) turning to state capitalism - whereby the state itself becomes the driving force behind capitalist accumulation - in an attempt to overcome economic backwardness and the centrifugal forces of tribalism. Certainly there has been a growing role for the state sector in all capitalist economies this century, especially in the infrastructure such as transport, communications, education, and health, where the state plays the dominant role. But contrary to what left reformists and 'official communists' alike would have us believe, this does not equal socialism. It is, as Lenin pointed out, a characteristic of moribund capitalism.

• **"Land reform".** Likewise land reforms were extensively carried out during the birth of capitalism and throughout the whole period of the demise of feudalism on a world scale. The former colonies of Britain, France, Holland, Belgium etc. carried out their own large scale land reforms at the expense of the old great landlords, but again these were carried out from above, and although they were progressive, they were not at all necessarily socialist.

• **"Improved well being of the masses".** This is

another vague criterion of 'socialist orientation'. Can it be said that there is anything particularly socialist about this? Throughout the whole of human history, throughout all social systems - from primitive communal to socialist - there have been, at certain periods in each society's development, an improvement in the well-being of the masses because of society's economic dynamism. Hence it is more than revealing that 'official communism' has been forced to turn a blind eye to regimes diplomatically allied to the Soviet Union which have driven down the living standards of their people.

As can be seen from the above, the theory of 'socialist orientation' needs no great analysis to highlight the fact that each of the general criteria mentioned could also apply to capitalism at certain periods of its development.

The state

Clearly there is a burning need to separate the wheat from the chaff. Firstly, it is necessary to separate out those countries which entered into diplomatic alliances with the Soviet state but remained capitalist states. Secondly, it is vital to assert the necessity for communist leadership in all revolutionary situations.

'Official communist' dogma did its best to avoid this. "Revolutionary democratic forces", according to Soviet sources, were the "politically active sections of the urban petty bourgeoisie, the peasantry and progressive intelligentsia who support the anti-fascist, anti-imperialist and anti-capitalist struggle", but "in countries where the working class is still in the formative stage ... includes workers, too" (Ibid, emphasis in original). This sociological approach is too loose. While we accept the idea that a revolution could bring to power a regime which embodies an alliance of oppressed classes, for that country to uninterruptedly develop towards socialism it is vital to win working class hegemony over and communist leadership of the revolutionary state, ie a dictatorship of the proletariat.

The dictatorship of the proletariat, in backward countries where the proletariat is numerically weak, "is an alliance between firm supporters of socialism and its vacillating allies ... an alliance between economically, politically, socially, and spiritually different classes" (Lenin CW, Vol 29, p381). Nevertheless, it is an alliance based entirely on the hegemony of the working class. As Lenin said, "the dictatorship of a single class is necessary not only for every class society in general ... but also for the entire historical period which separates capitalism from 'classless society', from communism." (Lenin, CW, Vol 25, p418).

Any revolutionary regime in which the proletariat does not exercise hegemony is bound to reach a point where it simply ceases to be revolutionary and starts to become reactionary. Certainly none of the genuine attempts to bypass capitalism owed anything to relying on the "anti-imperialist" national bourgeoisie. In China, Vietnam, Afghanistan and even in a case as unique as Cuba, the overthrow of the state was crucial, as was the nature of the new state.

The Cuban Revolution might have begun under the leadership of bourgeois democrats, but these were revolutionary bourgeois democrats who were themselves drawn to embrace communist policies. Fidel Castro gave a neat anecdotal summary of the transformation that had taken place when he wrote that he started the fight on the Sierra Maestra with Rousseau's *Social Contract* in his back pocket, and finished with Marx's *Capital* as his guide (though he'd have needed pretty roomy back pockets to fit it in).

The transformation of the leadership mirrored the transformation of the revolution. Within two years of the revolutionary overthrow of Batista, the left moving leaders in the July 26 Movement had fused with the radical urban base of the 'official communist' Cuban Socialist Party - which meant that by 1961 the bourgeois revolution had grown over into a socialist revolution.

The question of the state and which class has state power is, of course, central to the problem of bypassing capitalism. For the growing over of any political revolution against the existing state into a socialist revolution, what is needed is the transition to the rule of the working class, the only revolutionary class that is capable of building socialism: "Socialism is inconceivable unless the proletariat is the ruler of the state." (Lenin, CW, Vol 27, p340).

As we said in *The Leninist* No3 on the future prospects of those genuine revolutionary regimes the Soviets used to include under their 'socialist orientated' catch all: "What will decide their fate in our view is the independent organisation of the proletariat with the aim of establishing their dictatorship". What is needed in these countries are "genuine Communist Parties completely in-

dependent from all other parties and capable of leading the masses in the struggle for socialism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat".

Some, such as in the neo-Kautskyite formulations of the SWP, say that this is not on the agenda in the conditions of a backward country. This denies the possibility of proletarian organisation even at the lowest level. It also denies the Leninist theory of world revolution.

The 'official communists' in effect did the same thing. Talk about the regimes in Iraq, Syria, Algeria being 'socialist orientated' was an abandonment of proletarian internationalism, a denial of the necessity of the dictatorship of the proletariat and a surrender to the bourgeoisie. It was nothing but a 'left' excuse for capitalist development.

The theory of 'socialist orientation' was useful diplomatically to both the Soviet Union and such capitalist countries of 'socialist orientation'. But diplomacy is not the building of socialism. This was 'I'll scratch your back, you scratch mine' policies. Painting red the Iraqi and Syrian Ba'athists, the Algerian NLF, the Ethiopian Derg and other such types by Soviet 'official communism' has everything to do with the short term diplomatic interests of the Soviet state, nothing to do with the truth.

Where now?

As we have said, labelling countries which were capitalist as 'socialist orientated' was a diplomatic ploy. It was not a very clever one, rather a typically short term one befitting a conservative bureaucracy. In the longer term such an approach could only weaken the Soviet Union: a state born of revolution, whose survival and success relied in the last analysis on new revolutions being added to the world's revolutionary centre. Certainly, without adding new revolutions, adding new socialist states to the socialist community, imperialism was bound to slowly improve its relative strength.

Naturally there were popular grumblings in the streets and queues about Soviet aid to countries like Cuba and Vietnam. This was understandable, given the declining state of the Soviet economy and the nationalistic ideology of Soviet 'official communism'. But however vital, such aid was nonetheless

inevitably aid to established regimes, never to revolutionary insurrections. If we see this conservatism in conjunction with the Soviet Union's inability to keep up with the ongoing revolution in the forces of production - epitomised by bio and micro technology, computers and robots - it is easy to see why, by the 1970s, the Soviet Union entered into a period of increasing stagnation and why, by the 1990s, this has posed point blank the danger of counterrevolution.

Perestroika is the politics of counterrevolution at home. New Thinking the politics of counterrevolution abroad. Under the guise of New Thinking, Gorbachev is now seeking an alliance between a 'market economy' Union of Sovereign States and imperialism. To prove his sincerity, Gorbachev has lined up with the US led intervention in the Gulf and has already sought to extinguish 'hot spots' - ie revolutionary countries, or countries with revolutionary situations - which have annoyed or worried imperialism. Nicaragua, Namibia, Cambodia, Afghanistan, Angola and South Africa have already been adversely affected by this act of international treachery ... soon it will be Cuba's turn.

Of course, whatever the ideologists of Gorbachevism and the bourgeoisie say, the world is not about to enter into a new period of unprecedented peace and prosperity. Capitalism is visibly drifting towards a new general crisis. Part and parcel of this will be the increased exploitation and pauperisation of the backward and medium developed countries.

Obviously the world has changed since 1917, and we must take full account of all new developments. Revolution in these countries is not a thing of the past, but the only way to liberation - not through building socialism in isolation, but revolution as a spark and base for revolutions in more advanced countries. It is essential, therefore, to recognise that the nature of these revolutions will surely have to do more than carry through the tasks of national liberation.

Today, not only are there some 160 independent countries in the world, but the world's working class is no longer confined to a handful of advanced countries. The so-called Third World has become increasingly proletarianised. The revolution in these countries will reflect this. Today as never before, proletarian leadership of revolution in the backward and medium developed countries is both possible and necessary.

Michael Waters

Debating the Gulf

BOTH MEETINGS proved reasonably well attended and certainly lively. The platform consisted of representatives of the Communist Party of Great Britain and the Communist Party of Turkey. At the first meeting, comrade Ayse for the CPT opened on the situation in the Gulf region, which the comrade said had been precipitated by the "collapse of the socialist system", which had led to a "struggle for redivision of the world".

The comrade went on to argue that medium level developed capitalist countries want to take part in this redivision, as the Gulf crisis proves. Although clearly the map of the region is going to be redrawn, the CPT "can see no reason to defend the previous status quo". The previous maps of the region were drawn in the process of other revisions. Comrade Ayse therefore insisted that the correct attitude is to defend, "not borders determined by imperialist wars or agreements, but the self-determination rights of all the nations living in the region. The peoples themselves should redraw the borders."

She closed by delivering a stinging attack on Gorbachev's conciliation with imperialism. This provides "no comfort to peoples". On the contrary, it encourages reaction and leaves the masses defenceless against exploitation, oppression and war. "The only way out" is to raise the "revolutionary struggle against imperialism, for self-determination of nations and a just, lasting peace."

Comrade David Rhys spoke for the Communist

Party of Great Britain at both meetings. He dealt briefly with the various campaigns and committees that have arisen as a result of the Gulf conflict. In the course of this, he criticised the pro-imperialist stance of the Labour left/CND Committee to Stop War in the Gulf, which supports imperialist sanctions and refuses to call for troops out. He emphasised the need to make a clear distinction between anti-imperialist internationalists and such forces.

Concluding, the first meeting, he stated: "The only internationalist position is to fight, first and foremost, for the defeat of our own ruling class". "We therefore urge all comrades to rally round the slogan: Britain and Iraq, the main enemy is at home! The road to peace is through revolution".

The meetings were characterised by spirited debate in which representatives of the Trotskyist Workers Power and Spartacist League were given a full opportunity to present their views, along with (at the second meeting), the 'left communist' International Communist Current. The naive pro-Ba'athist arguments of the Trotskyists were opposed by supporters of *The Leninist* as well as comrades from Iran. The Sparts, in particular, excelled themselves in their condemnation of the revolutionary nationalism of the IRA, while urging defiance of Hussein's Iraq.

Debate was open, sharp and - we believe - firmly confirmed the correct nature of the Internationalist Committee's revolutionary defeatist stance.

Sean Quinn



Unity: a hostile report

The formation of the CPGB and its early years: articles, documents and manifestos

And so farewell - to all intents and purposes - to the Revolutionary Communist Party's *The Next Step*. It has been downgraded to a four page A4 size weekly, with Living Comfortably remaining the public face. This is because, we are told, the question of a "party-to-party" play off with the Labour Party is not on the agenda. The job is to consolidate a "nucleus of Marxists". This signals the demise of its silly mass party strutting and the adoption of a variant of the 'downturn'. Given that its 'consolidation' is done through a leftwing version of The Face, and its members are continuously encouraged to abstain from intervention (the 'non-class issue' of the poll tax being a case in point), what kind of 'Marxists' will the RCP wind up consolidating?

Some little time ago we pointed out the discrepancy between the positions of Workers Power and its Irish bedmate, the Irish Workers Group, on the violent struggle in the north of Ireland. WP defended it; the IWG condemned it. No problem, for two members of a 'democratic centralist' 'international', the League for a Revolutionary Communist International. This seems to have been solved in the IWG's favour. The latest issue of Workers Power condemns the use of collaborators in 'human bomb' attacks. Also, the LRCI's latest Trotskyist International equates the IRA with the Red Brigades and Red Army Faction, all being essentially undifferentiated movements "which resorted to individual terrorism". *Hands Off Ireland!* wrote to WP two months ago chastising it for its inactivity on Irish solidarity - which it failed to print, despite attacking HOI! in its pages. Our rightward slithering Trotskyists now seem to be adopting a 'theoretical' position to justify this. *Deja vu*.

We weren't too surprised that our organisation reclaiming the name of the CPGB has produced a typically anti-communist response from certain quarters; like would-be wag John Street in the 'Diary' column of that effervescent little number, Tribune. Apparently, in our statement, we indulge in "a long rant justifying *The Leninist*'s barmy Stalinism". If we qualify as 'barmy', I dread to think what clinging to some declining appendage of Kinnock's meal ticket to Number 10 is. Mr Street would be well advised to keep an eye over his shoulder for those nice men in the white coats.

VER the next few editions of *The Leninist* we will be reproducing documents, debates and resolutions of the Communist Party of Great Britain's 1st Congress, then known as the Communist Unity Convention. The congress brought together the British Socialist Party and the Communist Unity Group (as well as representatives of Guild Communists, the Socialist Prohibition Fellowship, three branches of the Herald League and one branch of the Socialist Labour Party outside the CUG). However, the process of uniting the working class vanguard was not complete. A number of pro-communist organisations remained outside - and for the moment hostile - to the CPGB; not least the Socialist Labour Party, as its report of the formation of the CPGB shows.

The Passing of the Communist Unity Group

From our own reporter - It was not at the Spa, where many capitalist international intrigues have taken place, but in the Pillar Hall, Cannon Street Hotel, London, on Saturday, July 31st, assembled a number of delegates from branches of the British Socialist Party, Independent Groups of Socialists, and some ex-SLPers now known as the Communist Unity Group. Their purpose was to found a 'real' Communist Party. Well, its birth was a very successful affair. Congratulations poured in from many Communist friends and parties. It was quite a lesson in geography to listen to Comrade Arthur MacManus, the chairman, reading the many letters of welcome to the coming new party of Communists. There was quite an array of individual good wishes too, from Lenin down to Tom Mann. The *Daily Herald* of Saturday also gave the Communist Party its blessing in the shape of a long leading article. Its soul was embodied in the following words: "The question of the relation of the new party to the Labour Party will be settled at today's conference. We believe, as we earnestly hope, that the vote is likely to be cast in favour of affiliation." I need hardly inform readers of *The Socialist* that the prayer of the *Daily Herald* was answered at the Sunday's meeting of the Conference. The Capitalist class and its press answered on Monday, Amen!

The British Socialist Party has simply changed its name, and business will be carried on as usual. It could not sever the umbilical cord that attaches it to the Labour Party. Not even the eloquence of the 'great three' - Paul, Bell, and MacManus - could persuade the delegates from Labour Party affiliation. No doubt the 'Communist Unity Group' imagined they were carrying out a master stroke of policy in attempting to found a Communist Party. But the half-baked revolutionary leaders and social reformers in the BSP are just as keen, just as Machiavellian in their tactics when it comes to party manoeuvres as the Communist Unity Group. The BSP delegates were weak in argument, the CUG were powerful. The BSP had numbers. The Commu-

nist Unity Group had orators and argument. Numbers carried the day. This was seen by all the SLP members when the referendum was taken, except the Communist Unity Group, who were by then within the party.

Arthur MacManus, chairman of the Provisional Committee, was chosen to act in the same capacity for the Conference. A Credentials Committee was appointed, and then came the chairman's address. This part of the business, said Arthur, could very well be dispensed with, but the Conference needs some points of guidance. These points of guidance served the purpose of introducing the preliminary work of the Communist Unity Group to the BSP delegates. "It has taken three years of the Russian Revolution and two years of discussion to bring about this Conference. There were other Communist groups and parties not represented here, but circumstances, he believed, would eventually bring them in. No word of his, no word of ours shall widen the breach between us." However seriously Arthur MacManus may have wished this, that opportunity has now passed. The work of our erstwhile comrades who tried to build an Independent Communist Party has failed, and resulted in themselves being swallowed up inside the Labour Party. Their adventure reminds me of the doggerel about the tiger, which runs something like this: "There was a young lady of Riga, Who went for a ride on a tiger. He came back from the ride, with the lady inside, And a smile on the face of the tiger."

"It was moved by a delegate that the Press should be excluded, but this found very little support. The Conference then settled down to its main business. The first resolution in the agenda dealt with general policy, and is as follows:

"The Communists in conference assembled declare for the Soviet (or Workers' Council) system as a means whereby the working class shall achieve power and take control of the forces of production; declare for the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary means for combating the counterrevolution during the transition period between Capitalism and Communism; and stand for the adoption of these means as steps towards the establishment of a system of complete Communism wherein the means of production shall be communally owned and controlled. This Conference therefore establishes itself the Communist Party on the foregoing basis."

This resolution was moved by AA Purcell, who had quite recently been to Russia, and informed the Conference that the Russian Communists were anxious to know when a strong Communist Party was going to be formed in England. The Standing Orders Committee dealt with all amendments, and agreed to accept the following amendment to this resolution: "And further declares its adhesion to the Third International."

The resolution and amendment were both accepted.

The third resolution on the agenda was taken second, and deals with the question as to whether the new Communist Party shall use Parliamentary action or not.

This resolution was moved by Tom Bell, of the Communist Unity Group,

viz: "The Communist Party repudiates the reformist view that a social revolution can be achieved by the ordinary methods of Parliamentary democracy, but regards Parliamentary and electoral action generally as providing a means of propaganda and agitation towards the revolution. The tactics to be employed by the representatives to Parliament or local bodies must be laid down by the party itself according to national or local circumstances. In all cases such representatives must be considered as holding a mandate from the party, and not from the particular constituency for which they happen to sit."

Bell argued the impossibility of accomplishing the social revolution through Parliamentary democracy. But by going to Parliament they could demonstrate inside the House of Commons that there is nothing to be gained for the workers from that Capitalist Chamber.

The value of the oath of allegiance was of no importance to them. As Communists their allegiance would be to the principles of Communism, and would act accordingly. Their policy inside the House would be a destructive, not a constructive one. In all cases they would take their mandate from the party and not from the constituency.

A delegate from Cardiff thought the whole of Bell's argument was against rather than in favour of Parliamentary action. He said if I argue that an institution is bad, rotten, and no good, it is like arguing that this chair - which he seized - is made of bad material and is falling to pieces, and then inviting someone to come and sit on it.

Watkins, a Welsh delegate, said - You cannot get the workers to vote on abstract principle. You must attack the Capitalist where he pays wages - at the point of production.

Bob Williams supported the resolution, and gave us a little eulogy on Lenin. He thought if we only had one Karl Liebknecht in Parliament it would add considerable strength to the movement. Later on he had an amendment that Communist candidates should take their mandate from the constituency as well as the party.

Bell replied to the discussion, and brought to a close the first session of the new Communist Party. The voting in favour of Parliamentary action was 186, against 19. Majority, 167.

The second session dealt with amendments to the resolution on "Parliamentary action" but no very radical alterations were made. One delegate suggested the deletion of "Parliamentary action" and suggested the substitution of "Revolutionary political action", but was turned down. So we now see that this new Communist Party stands for undiluted "Parliamentary action" and all it implies. During the discussion of the amendments many of the delegates who rose to speak were endeavouring to enlighten the Conference on the psychology of the working class, when into the hall dropped an old colonel, with a monocle glued in one eye, and a nice fat cigar in his mouth - a typical bourgeois! He listened for a few moments while some delegates were explaining what was meant by the working class. That the working class is not the man in the street, for he is a myth; nor is the working class the Labour Party, or any Socialist Party, and the Communists

are a very small minority of the working class. Then we were told the working class comprised that great mass of workers in the mines, workshops, fields, and factories, whom we have yet to convert to Communism. At this point the old bourgeois colonel got very fidgety, dropped his monocle, and shouted "Thank God for that!" The mention of the word "revolution" had frightened him, but now he felt somewhat jubilant and safe for another generation; so he left the room. It was now about ten o'clock, and the delegates were making their way homeward, with instructions to assemble on the morrow (Sunday) to take part in the final session of the Conference of the new Communist Party at the International Socialist Club, where, like Lipton's yacht, they got knocked out in the last round.

At the club we duly assembled about 10.30am.

The first business was the election of six new committee-men to join the Provisional Committee until December, when a new executive will be elected.

The last resolution was placed under two headings: (a) "That the Communist Party shall be affiliated to the Labour Party." This was moved by JF Hodgson, BSP. (b) "That the Communist Party shall not be affiliated to the Labour Party." This was moved by William Paul, Communist Unity Group. After about four hours' discussion of the pros and cons of both (a) and (b), the chairman thought the delegates had about exhausted all the arguments for and against, and instructed the delegates that they now had to vote for either (a) or (b). For affiliation: 100. Against: 85. Majority in favour of affiliation: 15.

This concluded the business, with the exception of receiving and dispatching a few telegrams to the Third International; Kameneff, the Russian diplomatic representative; and to the British delegates at the Third International; Comrades Beech, Clarke, Gallagher, McLean, Murphy, Queleh, Ramsay, and Tanner. The Communist Unity Group, according to their own admission, had now been about two years working for Communist Unity. The result is that they have now been swallowed up by the BSP with a nice new title. The BSP is henceforth to be known as the Communist Party of Great Britain.

The Communist Unity Group have failed to found a Communist Party that can stand on its own legs without holding on to the apron-strings of the Labour Party. The BSP when it returns under the wing of its mother - the Labour Party - somewhat strengthened by changing its name, will be taking back with it members of the Communist Unity Group, one-time comrades in the SLP.

Let us wish them joy and peace in their new spiritual home. They deserve some reward after their two years of arduous toil.

Our loss is our gain. The Labour Party - reaction - can now take unto its bosom all Revisionist elements. The field for Revolutionary Unity is now much clearer. The air is clearer. Confusion and Confusionists are now definitely pledged to the camp of reaction - the Labour Party.

The Socialist No30, Vol 14, August 12 1920

REVIEWS

Working Class Hero

Ewan MacColl, *Journeyman, an autobiography*, Sidgwick and Jackson 1990, pp400, £16.95 hdbk

IN MANY ways the great achievements of the great artist are determined by the images and impressions first absorbed in early childhood. This posthumously published autobiography, written with a flair that instantly sweeps the reader into MacColl's world, positively teems with such determining images and impressions.

MacColl consciously worked upon his memory, drew on his subconscious, to summon up a life which he recognised was coming to its end. "Sometimes, out of the corner of my mind's eye, I catch a fleeting glimpse of a mosaic floor showing a faded and almost indecipherable pattern ... which reveals more and more of its secrets as its pieces are prised out. One by one they come, loosening the pieces around them, until finally the entire design becomes clear" (p9).

The 'design' extends out from the early images of his mother's presence and the front room in his Salford home, "the centre of our social life", to his militant union activist father with the magical singing voice, and then beyond to the all-important street where the young MacColl takes up the struggle that is society with a vengeance. The games, the gangs, the horrors of schools aiming only to churn out factory fodder and his growing sexual awareness with all its fumblings are here, to strike a chord with anyone who has grown up in a working class world.

Blacklisting and chronic asthma reduced his father from a skilled foundry worker to "just another reject among three million other rejects" (p29). Entering adult life himself as an unemployed 15 year old in the early 1930s, MacColl plunged into what he describes as his period of exploration and discovery. Politics and theatre were the terrain.

For today's revolutionary forces fighting in the field of culture, such as Workers Theatre Movement (of which Ewan was founding Honorary President) there are many rich rewards and valuable lessons in this book. He charts the path he took when he set up the agitprop street troupe Red Megaphones, with a vivid description of a performance at a fifty thousand strong demonstration against the means test. The performance is brought to a halt by a charge of mounted riot police on the mass audience, but MacColl and his young comrades march on the houses of the councillors who are members of the unemployment tribunal: "As we walk we hatch elaborate schemes of revenge and wonder if things will ever be the same again" (p200).

On he rushes to his meeting Joan Littlewood, the woman who was quickly to become his wife and partner in the struggle, a relationship which was to last 20 years, and the fight to forge a theatre befitting the momentous times and the class historically tasked to change the world: "From the very beginning of our work together, we had confidence in our ability to create a theatre which would be more dynamic, truthful and adventurous than anything the bourgeois theatre could produce. Furthermore - and we were adamant on this point - it would be a lot more efficient" (p211).

Rather than a strictly chronological framework for the book, MacColl leaps back and forth through time, ignoring the autobiographical convention of anecdotes about famous people he met. He concentrates on what was important to him, as if testing himself against that epic summons of a song of his, *The Ballad of Accounting*: "What

did you learn in the morning? How much did you know in the afternoon? Were you content in the evening?"

What he stresses again and again is the need to reveal the interconnectedness of all things. Nowhere does he describe this more powerfully than in the epilogue, in which he counters the insinuation that he should feel bitter for the ultimate failure of his efforts in theatre, folk music and the Communist Party of Great Britain: "My years in the communist movement had accustomed me to evaluating experience as part of a great historical design into which was being fed more and more information. On a smaller scale, but no less significant, were my attempts to correlate everything I saw, did, felt and read into a single intelligible entity which, in its turn, would become part of the greater historical design" (p386).

After the 1930s we get little description of practical involvement in the Party, due to the very lengthy time spent touring, and also no doubt due to the long decline of the CPGB into the reformist mire. We get nothing on his break with the CPGB and flirtation with Maoism in the early 60s. The reason is clear. MacColl remained committed to the true spirit and tradition of the CPGB. He makes this abundantly clear in his epilogue: "So the party I had served was moribund; but the ideas and concepts are still as alive as they ever were. And has there ever been such a desperate need for a revolutionary party as there is today?" (p385).

The Leninist is alone in fighting to reforge the Party which Ewan MacColl served and wanted to serve again. We therefore echo the saying of El Salvador's guerrillas, quoted by Peggy Seeger - his companion for the last 30 years - in her moving and revealing introduction: "We bring our dead forward with us, never forgetting, always mentioning them, honouring them" (p6).

We will never forget and we will always honour Ewan MacColl, the finest communist artist Britain has ever produced. He will always be with us.

Gavin Kyle

1919 and all that

Liam Cahill, *Forgotten Revolution - Limerick Soviet 1919: a threat to British power in Ireland*, O'Brien 1990, pp168, £14.95

LIAM CAHILL'S book is about the Limerick general strike of April 1919. It was called and organised by the Limerick United Trades and Labour Council, against British authorities turning Limerick into a 'special military area' under the Defence of the Realm Act, after the shooting of a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary. This happened while the IRA were rescuing one of their leading members in Limerick, Robert Byrne, from a British prison hospital. Byrne was shot by the police in the course of the rescue, and died later. The IRA turned out en masse for the funeral, and the local labour movement reacted with fierce condemnation of the state forces.

Proclaiming Limerick a 'special military area' meant British authorities issued passes to the Limerick workers. These had to be produced when passing through army checkpoints, which workers had to pass through several times a day. Any supporters of the republican movement would be effectively giving themselves up if they tried to obtain a pass or get to work.

On Sunday April 13, the 35 delegates of the LUTLC met, declared the general strike and elected a strike committee of three. The strike committee took charge of the city, it regulated the price and distribution of food,

published a daily newspaper and supervised the maintenance of essential services. With the inspiration of the revolutionary wave set in motion by the success of the Russian revolution, the British ruling class knew that if the strike escalated and became national, revolution would probably follow. One Irish capitalist stated that the strike could spread "over the whole of Ireland ... and it may be to England, Scotland and Wales, and I need not say what the result will be" (p99).

The members of the strike committee met with members of the national executive of the Irish Labour Party and Trades Union Congress. The strike committee wanted the ILPTUC to call for a national general stoppage. Like true union bureaucrats, the ILPTUC opposed this.

Cahill says the reason for the ILPTUC opposition to a national general strike was that they "recognised the potential for Limerick to escalate into a bloody revolutionary conflict with Britain if it was pushed to a national strike. The congress had neither the physical means nor had it developed the political consciousness among its rank and file members to pursue or defend such a strategy. They already knew they could not count on the wholehearted support of Sinn Fein, the IRA or the Dail. There were doubts over whether the National Union of Railwaymen could be relied upon to paralyse transport in such a strike, and without doubt, the Unionist workforces of Ulster would actively oppose it. There was uncertainty too over how trade unionists and socialists in Britain would react to such a development in Ireland" (p110).

After the call for a national stoppage was refused, a 'peace formula' was drawn up by the town's Sinn Fein mayor and a Catholic bishop. Possessing no independent strategy, and demoralised by their seeming isolation, the strike committee told workers with permits to resume work on April 24, and the rest three days later. The strike was defeated.

The reason for the defeat was the lack of an independent leadership that genuinely acted in the interests of the working class, without needing permission from trade union bureaucrats, Sinn Fein or the church to lift the struggle on to higher levels. This leadership could only have been provided by a Communist Party.

For the first time since the Irish Citizen Army's role in the 1916 Easter Rising, the working class was playing an independent part in the revolutionary struggle. Lack of politically independent leadership not only led to the strike's defeat, but also to the marginalisation of the working class, as no force was able to regroup the militants. Instead, the working class fell prey to bourgeois ideology in the form of syndicalism, nationalism and Catholicism.

The absence of an independent, revolutionary working class allowed reaction in Britain and Ireland to reach a compromise solution - partition. This, as James Connolly had warned, created a carnival of reaction, north and south. In the north, loyalism strengthened its hold. The political consequences of the liquidation of the Irish revolution by 1923 are clear in the context of the Limerick working class, when during the Spanish Civil War, Limerick labour movement leaders acted as recruiting sergeants and fund raisers for Franco.

Today such reaction remains embedded in Irish life through the continued division of the country into the Six and Twenty-six Counties. Only a strategy of working class leadership of the struggle for national reunification and uninterrupted revolution can break through the complex of religious and social backwardness.

Cahill's book is not a Marxist analysis. He looks at events from a trade unionist perspective. Having said that, he gives a detailed account of the militant struggle of the workers of Limerick against British imperialism.

Josh Leaversuch

ACTION

Communist Party

London Seminars: 5pm Sundays. Details 071-431 3135.

December 9: Which way for Communists? Open debate on the occasion of the Euros' liquidation congress.

December 16: The politics of the Thatcher decade - 1.

December 23: The Jesus story - communist style.

December 30: The politics of the Thatcher decade - 2.

January 6: New series of seminars. Collective discussion towards drawing up the Draft Programme of the CPGB.

Leninism Lives! posters (A2) and stickers, advertising our organisation and paper. Ring 071-431 3135, or send donation with order to our box number.

Hands Off Ireland!

Sell *HOI!* paper No5. Bulk copies available at 5 for £1 including p&p.

London activists' meetings: London, 7.30pm every Thursday: Phone 071-431 3135 for details.

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Workers Theatre Movement

WTM club The Internationale: 7.30pm Old Piano Warehouse, Hawley Road, Camden Town, NW1 (Camden Town tube). Admission £3, unwaged £2. Theatre, music, dance, poetry:

Saturday December 22: Red Christmas.

Monday December 31: Hogmanay Party.

Performers please contact Tam on 071-431 3135.

Rehearsals: Every Sunday in London. Phone Tam on 071-431 3135 or write to WTM, BCM Box 928, London WC1N 3XX for details of WTM activities.

Internationalist Committee

Britain-Iraq: the main enemy is at home!
Peace through revolution!

Tuesday January 15: Picket of the US Embassy, 5.30-7.00pm, Grosvenor Square, London W1. Nearest tube Bond Street

Unemployed Workers Charter

Wednesday December 12: The unemployed say "No to British Militarism!" Joint UWC/HOI! picket of army recruitment centre, with Workers Theatre sketches. 5.30pm to 7.00pm, Strand, London (opposite Charing Cross tube).

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Make revolution, not reactionary war

THE drums of war are beating ever louder and ever more menacingly. Yet undoubtedly, as witnessed by the 'mercy missions' to Iraq by a veritable host of former chancellors, prime ministers, ministers and aspirant world statesmen, we are - at the time of writing, anyway - still in a phoney war period. This will not last. The 200,000 extra US troops will soon be in place and as soon as the UN January 15 deadline passes, war can be expected at any moment.

Unless Saddam Hussein does a humiliating and politically suicidal U-turn and gives back his newly acquired '19th Province' to the al-Sabah puppets of imperialism, the US will launch a military assault on Iraq (and we should expect it on Iraq; Bush has committed himself to removing Saddam Hussein as well as 'liberating' Kuwait).

If war comes, it will be horrendously destructive. Saddam Hussein promises, if attacked, to take the conflict to Saudi Arabia and Israel, unleashing binary chemical and anthrax weapons, destroying oil wells and causing an ecological disaster that would affect the whole region. Such wild threats are music to US imperialist ears. The US is just itching for an excuse to bring into play its nuclear arsenal.

Iraq is no Panama, no Grenada. It is a militarily powerful medium developed country with its own imperialist ambitions. The casualty ratio will be 5:1, not 100:1.

A conventional war might see the death of 100,000 Iraqi soldiers. Bush would not even shed crocodile tears for them. However, the US would itself suffer Vietnam level losses, but not after years of protracted warfare, rather within weeks. According to Pentagon sources, by day twelve of a US-Iraqi war, 20,000 US soldiers would perish and many more tens of thousands would suffer agonising and crippling injury.

To avoid such opinion poll damaging casualties and possible resulting mass unrest, Bush would be quite prepared to turn Baghdad into another Hiroshima, Basra into another Nagasaki. If that is considered politically unacceptable, then there is always the deadly array of battlefield tactical nuclear weapons the US already has in place in Saudi Arabia. They would pockmark Iraq and Kuwait with countless Chernobyls, but they would also reduce to cinders Iraq's army divisions and tank concentrations.

Of course, the reason we oppose a US-led imperialist assault on Iraq is not only because of the sickening death and destruction it would wreak. We oppose imperialism root and branch. There is nothing democratic or progressive about imperialism's campaign against Iraq, everything hypo-

In spite of the talks between the US and Iraq, war in the Gulf looks imminent. The commander of British forces tells people to prepare for a 'standoff'.

critical and reactionary. US imperialism is not out to liberate 'poor little Kuwait' or remove a regional dictator. Instead it would impose a new form of colonialism.

The US might be able to orchestrate - militarily, politically or financially - all the major imperialist powers behind it in its anti-Iraq crusade. Nevertheless the US is a superpower acutely conscious that it is suffering from relative decline. Japan already challenges in many areas of the world market; a German led Europe could overtake it. And it will be Germany that will primarily benefit from the collapse of bureaucratic socialism in Eastern Europe and its imminent demise in the USSR. Ironically, therefore, the US financed imperialist victory in the Cold War can only further exacerbate US relative decline and bring inter-imperialist rivalries to the fore.

Under these circumstances the US is presented with a window of opportunity by Iraq's expansionist adventure in Kuwait. Indeed, some say the US set up Saddam Hussein in true Machiavellian style, that the US wanted Iraq to attack Kuwait so as to attack it in turn. To achieve this, the US sent to its former ally against Iran discreet diplomatic signals indicating that it would not stand in Iraq's way in its "border dispute with Kuwait". Like a young tiger coming across a tethered goat, Hussein could not believe his luck.

Only after having invaded and annexed Kuwait did he realise that the US had landed him in a trap.

It has to be said that, in a sense, US invasion and takeover of Iraq would be as much against Japan and Germany as Saddam Hussein. A *Pax Americana* in Iraq would certainly put the US in a position where it could redivide the whole of the Middle East in its own image and interests. This would give the US control of half the world's oil production. A victorious Gulf War would thus put it in a stronger position *vis-a-vis* oil dependent Germany and Japan.

Against such a background of inter-imperialist rivalry - and, when it comes down to it, robbery - we consider it the worst sort of opportunism for Labour leftists, Euro and CPB 'official communists' to back UN sanctions against Iraq and call for the restoration of the feudal al-Sabahs. What we should be fighting for is the right of the Arab, Kurdish, Turkic and other peoples of the region to redraw the map as they think fit, not the resurrection of an imperialist created, artificial,

feudal state. Furthermore, surely anyone in the workers movement who recognises the aims of US imperialism in particular, let alone the nature of imperialism in general, should also recognise that UN sanctions against Iraq are in reality nothing more than a form of imperialist economic warfare.

What is needed in Britain is not a pacifist 'peace' movement which advises imperialism that its best interests would be served through starving Iraq with sanctions and can only make an impotent call for a "phased withdrawal". What is needed is a revolutionary peace movement - a movement which dares put forward the demand for the withdrawal of all imperialist forces from the Gulf and dares to make it real through fighting for everything from trade union resolutions to militant demonstrations, from blacking arms and war supplies to encouraging servicemen to mutiny and rebel. That is the way to stop war. That is what the Internationalist Committee sponsored by the Communist Party is committed to build.

Fighting for defeat of the US-led war machine in the Gulf should not lead anyone to call for the victory of Saddam Hussein's Iraq. Iraq is not fighting imperialism. Iraq wants to join the imperialist club as a junior partner - a utopian dream maybe, but one that flows from economic and political necessity. Economically, Iraq has, after all, reached the stage where finance capital dominates, where its ruling class needs to become imperialist or face civil war.

Unlike the Trotskyite WRP, the 'official communist' NCP and the petty bourgeois left organised under the hegemony of the RCP, our hatred of imperialism does not lead us to backing the proto-imperialism of Iraq. While some of these organisations adopt a pro-Ba'athist stance purely in the hope of gaining monetary reward, we accept that the majority of these organisations constitute a naive pro-Ba'ath left.

Nevertheless, naivety has nothing to do with Marxism, with scientific socialism. Marxism does not appraise war from the viewpoint of who is big, who small, who attacked first, who is the aggressor, who the victim. No, our attitude towards war is determined by the "class character of the war; why the war broke out; the classes that are waging it; the historical and historic-economic conditions which gave rise to it" (Lenin).

Who can deny the reactionary and capitalist interests that propelled Sad-

dam Hussein's *Anschluss* with Kuwait, or how these same interests have led his regime into a potential war with the US, Britain and their western and Arab allies? There is nothing in the policy or actions of Saddam Hussein that should command our sympathy or support. The workers, Kurds and oppressed masses in Iraq should not "suspend" their revolutionary struggle and enter into a "military united front" with the Ba'athist regime, as some Labourites Trotskyites plead for them to do.

No, they have every reason to use Saddam Hussein's present difficulties as their opportunity: an opportunity to make revolution.

That would be the best possible service the masses of Iraq could do for the world's working class, and we should do everything we can to aid them in that struggle, not least by furthering the struggle for revolution in our own country.

Naturally the pro-Ba'athist left in Britain tries to cover its theoretical poverty by making endless excuses for Saddam Hussein. The more it argues, the deeper it digs itself into a miserable hole.

For the WRP, Saddam Hussein is the leader of the Arab revolution; for the RCP, Iraq is the small guy which deserves support; for the NCP, the right wing anti-communist Ba'athist regime leads a "non-capitalist" Iraq (incidentally, in the course of such defence of Iraqi reaction more than one group has felt compelled to attack *The Leninist* for being "pro-imperialist" because of our revolutionary defeatist stance and our loyalty to Marxism-Leninism).

Whatever the variation, to 'clinch' the pro-Ba'athist argument, they all present voluminous evidence to prove that Iraq is *not* imperialist - because it is not exporting capital, has not divided up the world, etc. - that it is a semi-colony whose economy is still characterised by the export of commodities.

All of this is beside the point. We do not say Iraq is imperialist. It is proto-imperialist. Talk about it being a "developed and industrialised semi-colony" (*Workers Power* November 1990) almost amounts to a grudging admission of the truth: that Iraq is dominated economically, socially and politically by monopoly and finance capital. If that is the case, and it is, it means Iraqi capitalism has reached its final, moribund, reactionary stage.

What is on the agenda historically in Iraq, therefore, is not progress under capitalism - which has run out of all progressive possibilities - but socialism. Yes, Iraq is ripe for the dictatorship of

the Ba'athist bourgeoisie to be smashed by the dictatorship of the proletariat.

What about Iraq's reliance on oil, as opposed to the export of capital? This is true. After eight years of cripplingly expensive proto-imperialist war with Iran, however, it is hardly surprising that the massive capital surplus it once possessed has turned into a massive deficit. The same thing happened to an undeniably imperialist Britain during the course of the two world wars it fought this century. But again, what we are talking about is Iraq needing to become imperialist, not that it is imperialist (its need to become imperialist was what was behind its war with Iran and its annexation of Kuwait).

As to Iraq being a semi-colony, this is perhaps the most transparent of all the naive pro-Ba'athist excuses. Iraq might occupy a secondary position in the world economic pecking order, but as the slide towards war shows, it is hardly doing the bidding of its supposed imperialist masters in Washington or Whitehall. In fact, because it was able to amass huge revenues from oil during the 1970s, because it had a close alliance with the Soviet Union and because of its own internal dynamics, Iraq has for many years pursued a foreign policy that has brought it into head on conflict time after time with the dominant imperialist powers. By definition semi-colonies don't behave like that.

Even if Iraq were a typical semi-colony, it is worth recalling that Lenin specifically warned communists from entering into alliances with reactionaries ... or tolerating "the strivings for privileges on the part of the oppressed nation" (*Right of nations to self determination*). The central core of Lenin's world strategy was not to forge an alliance with reactionaries of the Saddam Hussein or any other type. Lenin sought to build a revolutionary alliance between the proletariat - in his day almost entirely concentrated in the imperialist countries - and the peasant masses in the colonial and semi-colonial countries. That is what he meant by the slogan: workers and oppressed nations of the world unite!

Today, our strategy must take full account of the stupendous proletarianisation of the so-called 'Third World' - the fact that the contradiction between workers and capitalists dominates the politics of most of these countries. Our task is to forge the revolutionary unity of the world's workers against imperialism, proto-imperialism and all forces of reaction, for a new world order: communism.

- Down with Saddam Hussein, US and British Imperialism!
- For revolutionary defeatism!

David Sherriff



Taking up the banner

*Speech by comrade John Bridge on the occasion of the 73rd anniversary of the October Revolution and the 9th anniversary of the launch of *The Leninist**

DEAR comrades and friends, esteemed guests, seventy years ago, in July 1920, the Communist Party of Great Britain was founded. Naturally, for us this anniversary is cause for celebration.

We've never stopped pointing out to our friends on the left in Britain that there has only ever been one genuine working class party in our country. That party was not the Labour Party - the party that so many left wingers reluctantly, even shamefacedly joined in the 1980s, in a vain search for an easy road to socialism. Sociologically, the Labour Party might have a working class electoral base. However, it was born out of a union of the fat cat TUC bureaucracy with defecting Liberal MPs; it was always, and remains, politically a party of monopoly capitalism, a party of reaction.

Though some seem determined to forget it now, the only genuine working class party our country has produced is the Communist Party of Great Britain. As Lenin said, "the Party is the highest form of class association of the proletarians". The CPGB was clearly such an organisation,

it rallied to it all the finest workers: those in the forefront of struggle, those who were the most determined revolutionaries, who went on to lead the National Minority Movement, the 1926 General Strike and the National Unemployed Workers Movement, etc.

The formation of the CPGB was clearly the greatest organisational achievement of our working class. Precisely because of this, and because so many try to deny its historic importance, above all because of the stinking opportunism of those who make up the leadership of the 'official' Communist Party today, it was necessary that the 70th anniversary of the CPGB be more than a celebration. It was a cause for struggle.

It is interesting to look back at our 1990 aims, which we announced almost exactly a year ago today. An important element in these aims were plans to steal the thunder of the Euro organisation as it illegitimately 'celebrated' the 70th anniversary of our Party.

There can be no doubt that we succeeded - unfortunately not mainly because of our hard

work, imagination and daring. True, we staged a disciplined and highly effective token occupation of the Euros' headquarters, then at 16, St John Street. Furthermore we organised our own militant celebration on the anniversary of the foundation congress of the CPGB, which fittingly coincided with the triumphant end of our 7th Summer Offensive. But as it turned out, in spite of this there was no thunder to steal, only a whimper. The competition simply walked off the field.

At the end of 1989 the Euro organisation issued a 'special' 70th anniversary 1990 membership card to the dwindling numbers prepared to fill one out. Yet, in Nina Temple - who took over from Gordon McLennan in December 1989 - it had a leader who came not to praise the CPGB but to bury it, as she had done the Young Communist League.

As soon as she was elected Euro secretary, Temple went out of her way to tell anyone who would listen that she supported the counterrevolutionaries in Eastern Europe, thought that Bolshevism was a total flop and that she did not owe even a formal commitment to the "constricting" prin-

ciples of Marxism-Leninism.

For the 'communism is dead' ideologists, this horse's mouth confession was another reassuring nail in the coffin of capitalism's mortal enemy. For those remaining few who took the rules of her organisation seriously, it might have seemed strange. After all, its rules even now state that Marxism-Leninism is the Euro organisation's guide to action.

Final confirmation that all we had to steal was a whimper, came over the first weekend of September 1990. The Euro Executive Committee voted unanimously to recommend that its December 8-9 42nd Congress rename their organisation and drop all reference to communism. It was also decided to abandon any pretence that the Radical Socialist Federation - which is what the majority want to call it - would have anything to do with Marxism-Leninism.

Undoubtedly we will soon hear Nina Temple intone the last rites over the re-named Euro organisation; whatever she now believes, they go not to renewal but to liquidationist oblivion.

SUPPLEMENT

Whenever it comes, the Euros' final stanza is bound to be sorry and pathetic. Yet it cannot be emphasised too strongly that their sorry, pathetic end is not the end of the Party founded in July 1920. Rather, it is the end of what used to be Euro-communism; and in its own perverse and unintentional way, this represents a call to take up the banner of communism raised in 1920 - a challenge to reforge our Communist Party of Great Britain.

Communist unity

Of course, at the moment there are those who say we can rebuild the Communist Party through 'communist unity', by which they mean a fusion of the New Communist Party, the *Morning Star's* Communist Party of Britain and other 'official communist' rumps - the former Maoist Communist Party of Britain (Marxist-Leninist) has even been mentioned.

At a local level there are all sorts of little get-togethers (which in practice seem to add up to no more than an agreement to do 'joint' work in the CND). Indeed, because of a certain degree of pressure from below, a reluctant CPB leadership has been forced to call a national 'consultative conference' on the question on January 19 1991, much to the delight of the NCP, which is at the moment making most of the unity running.

Though we have not been invited to the CPB conference, though we don't expect to be invited (incidentally we consider this a compliment), and although the NCP refuses to debate with us or include us among their potential unity partners (again, we consider this a compliment) we have been urged by a number of correspondents to drop our 'sectarian' attacks on the CPB, NCP, etc, and instead get together with them. After all, it is argued, the CPGB was formed through a fusion in 1920. Therefore it can be reformed through a process of fusion in 1990.

The claims of a parallel between 1920 and 1990 are profoundly mistaken, ahistorical, abstract and, it must be said, unprincipled. Communist unity is a good slogan - but a slogan which can cover many sins, as can the slogan working class unity. The crucial question for genuine communists is: unity around what?

There's unity around opportunism, unity around the reactionary right wing, unity behind the leadership of careerists and traitors. That unity is bad. It does nothing to serve the long term interests of the working class and the struggle for communism. Then there is unity around Marxism-Leninism, unity around revolution and communism, unity behind those who singlemindedly fight for that cause.

There can and should be *unity in action* between revolutionaries and opportunists in the workers' movement over immediate issues, supporting a strike, demonstration, etc (even here, revolutionaries, if they are worthy of the name, will fight for the leadership of the mass through their own particular tactics and slogans). But what we are talking about here, as all concerned insist, is principled unity, permanent unity in one party, communist unity.

For us, such unity can only be unity around a genuine communist programme (in the broadest sense of the term to start with perhaps, but in the literal sense as quickly as possible). This is the unity we have openly fought and argued for since we first began publishing in November 1981. It is also the unity around which the CPGB was originally forged.

Readers of our paper will know that we have, over the last year, been republishing articles, resolutions, and manifestos of the various organisations that eventually fused together to form the CPGB. In spite of all the arguments (correct and incorrect) that took place between the British Socialist Party, Socialist Labour Party, Workers Socialist Federation, Communist Unity Group and the smaller pro-communist groups, what is clear is that they eventually came together not on some common denominator basis, through dropping their 'sectarian' argumentativeness, but through overcoming their British backwardness. They resolved their differences by uniting around the highest theory available: the principles and programme of Bolshevism.

It was the living example of working class power in Russia, the revolutionary practice of Lenin and the Bolsheviks, their unremitting ideological struggle against opportunism, that inspired Albert Inkpin, William Paul, Tom Bell, Arthur MacManus, Willie Gallagher and the others who founded the CPGB. That was their starting point, as can be seen in the three cardinal principles contained in *The Call for a Communist Party* issued by the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB in the build up to the July 1920 Unity Convention.

These principles were:

- Proletarian internationalism: the understand-

ing that the working class was a world class that could only find liberation through world revolution. That meant building a Communist Party that would be a component part of a democratic centralist world party of revolution which would challenge the 'power and authority of capitalism the world over.'

• Revolution: The capitalists will "never yield to the revolutionary enslaved class without struggle". The communists must as a result be "prepared to meet and crush all the efforts of capitalist reactionaries to regain their lost privileges".

• Soviets. Communists must fight to overthrow the "sham of parliament" and replace it with soviets, or workers' councils, ie organs of working class struggle that are transformed in the heat of the class struggle and revolution into organs of working class state power, organs of the "dictatorship of the proletariat".

None of our 'official communists' is genuinely committed to these 'fundamental principles'. But if through devious lip service to Marxism-Leninism one was able to get through the net, would any of them be able to fulfil half, or even a quarter of the *Terms of Admission into the Communist International*, the famous 21 conditions, which were drawn up by Lenin specifically to keep centrists and opportunists out of the Third International (VI Lenin, CW Vol 31, pp207-212)? I think not.

Do any of them "systematically and relentlessly" expose "not only the bourgeoisie, but also its accomplices - the reformists of every shade" (Condition 1)? Hardly! All the 'official communist' rumps seem to think that the Labour Party can somehow introduce socialism. In fact the largest of the rumps, the CPB, is politically indistinguishable from the Labour left. It is certainly a shade of reformism.

Have any of them dismissed "reformists and centrists from positions of any responsibility" (Condition 2)? No, the 'official communist' rumps are led by reformists and centrists who occupy all positions of responsibility.

Is legal work "combined" with illegal work, have "parallel illegal organisations" been built (Condition 3)? They all fawn before legality. The thought of anything illegal is an anathema to them.

Have any of them conducted "persistent and systematic propaganda and agitation" in the armed forces (Condition 4)? Another anathema.

Do any of them "demonstrate to the workers that, without the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism, no international arbitration courts, no talk about reduction of armaments, no 'democratic' reorganisation of the League of Nations [read UN today - JBJ] will save mankind from new imperialist wars" (Condition 6)? Quite the contrary. Unitedly and loyally, they line up behind CND, put their faith in superpower arms deals and peddle the idea that peace can come *without* the revolutionary overthrow of capitalism.

We could go on, but I think we have made the point. As the 'official communists' "reject in principle" these "obligations and theses", they would inevitably have fallen foul of Condition 21, which demanded that such types be "expelled from the Party" (VI Lenin, CW Vol 31, p563).

So what sort of 'communist unity' are these people in the CPB, NCP, etc talking about? Clearly they're not talking about genuine communist unity - that's obviously why they haven't proposed fusion with us, or even written to us. What they're actually talking about of course, is opportunist unity. But not any old opportunist unity. This unity is the unity of 'official communism' in crisis, in decomposition. It is the unity of those who fear genuine open ideological struggle, the unity of groups which were only kept together through a bureaucratic centralist crushing of debate, the unity of little men who want to keep their big titles but who have seen their followers drain away and their ideology collapse.

The Euro organisation might have plummeted from 20,000 to 5,000 in ten years, but the other rumps have not fared much better. Within two years the CPB has lost nearly half the 1,400 members it claimed at its 1988 peak. The NCP used to tell the press - when it bothered to ask - that it had a membership of "under 1,000" - always true, but by a long way. Today it has been reduced to little more than 200 disorientated souls.

The reason for this haemorrhaging is ideological. Looking around the world, what does the rank and file member of one of the 'official communist' organisations see? Everything they regarded as certain and safe, everything that gave them a feeling of strength in their weakness in Britain, has turned to dust.

In their different ways, the leaders of 'official communism' have, in spite of their intentions to the contrary, only compounded the problem. Like the bourgeoisie, the Euros would have us believe that communism has failed. In that case, members will come to the same conclusion as the leaders: there is no reason to exist as any sort of organisation.

The CPB tops refuse to admit that anything fundamental is wrong, and have tried to embrace 'market socialism', perestroika and so-called New Political Thinking. Yet even this sorry organisation has found the spiralling unemployment, Gorbachev's Alternative Capitalist Economic Strategy, and the Soviet media's open admiration of capitalist values, hard to swallow. There is another, bigger problem for them, though: the *Morning Star* is financially dependent on the Soviet Union. The CPB has thus sought to give Gorbachevism a left face, in spite of the fact that this counterrevolutionary ideology stands in flat contradiction to the 'class politics' on which the CPB first established itself.

An unstable and eclectic muddle must result - something epitomised by its version of the *British Road to Socialism*, published last year. It confidently tells us that the world balance has decisively shifted in favour of socialism, and it is this, not their pacifism, legalism and reformism, that leads them to advocate a peaceful, parliamentary road to socialism.

As to the NCP, having decided "no longer to be mealy mouthed", it now has the virtue of admitting, albeit reluctantly, that Gorbachevism means that "the future of socialism and working class state power in the Soviet Union is now in jeopardy" (*The New Worker* November 16 1990). Yet, far from going back and analysing the role of the bureaucratic caste and why, under the leadership of Gorbachev, it has embraced Euro-style revisionism, the NCP's General Secretary seeks refuge in a claimed lack of "data to make a correct assessment". Because of this bankruptcy he is forced to turn to a crude and silly 'great men make history' theory.

Everything in the Soviet Union was more or less okay under Stalin, Krushchev, Brezhnev and Andropov. Eric Trevett reassures his members. Indeed, everything was more or less okay until "three years ago", because Gorbachev was "still part of the leadership collective which had a Marxist approach to historical analysis." According to his version of events, things have gone wrong in the Soviet Union because Gorbachev "lacked the ability" to stick to this "analysis" (*Ibid*).

But the result in the NCP is more than such silliness. Because the NCP has been forced to abandon its congenital tailism of the existing leadership of the Soviet Union, it is ideologically adrift and heading into dangerous waters. Desperate to make up funds lost with the counterrevolution in Czechoslovakia, the NCP is hawking itself around the world in search of new paymasters for its posse of full timers and its weekly paper. This is surely what has led it to a sudden admiration for Kim Il Sung and his Juche system, and defence of the overtly reactionary and fascistic Ba'athist regime of "the great revolutionary" Saddam Hussein in "non-capitalist" Iraq (quotes from Andy Brooks, NCP International Secretary).

How can there be communist unity through a fusion of such organisations? There is nothing honest or principled in the talk of unity coming from the 'official communist' rumps. What concerns them all is their narrow careerist interests. As a result their unity mongering is bound to come to nothing, bound in its own way to speed up the disintegration of 'official communism'.

Let us repeat that, in spite of this, we've always been prepared to talk to their leaders - as a way of opening up a dialogue with their rank and file. Yet, significantly, in spite of our countless calls to the present unity mongers, all our offers of debate have gone unanswered. Obviously they are afraid of real communists, and that seals their fate. We would also add, by way of an aside, that those who urge us to talk to the CPB and NCP ought to practice what they preach. How about you comrades plucking up the courage to talk to us? You know our address and telephone number.

Of course, whether they do or don't is not the main question. The main question is reforging the CPGB on the basis of Marxism-Leninism and making and training a new generation of communists.

We have every reason to be confident.

Only our organisation advanced a Leninist critique of bureaucratic socialism that meant that we were equally correct and prompt in our analysis of the peaceful, democratic counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe and the danger of the same process unfolding in the Soviet Union. Where the NCP refused to see any problems, then refused to defend socialism in Romania, and the CPB welcomed the first stage of counterrevolution in the GDR, Poland, Hungary etc, we called for proletarian democracy through a proletarian political revolution.

Only our organisation maintained its political independence and refused to sell its soul to bureaucratic socialism. Only our organisation has not been thrown into crisis by its collapse.

Only our organisation has won new communists through systematic propaganda work, not

least around vital issues such as Ireland, unemployment and the Gulf. In contrast, the NCP and CPB have a record of inactivity and tailism of the Labour Party second to none. That's why our organisation has grown, their organisations have imploded.

What made us correct then, and makes us correct now, is not accident. It is our solid foundation on, and development of, Marxist-Leninist theory. That theory will also enable us to be correct in the future, and means that real communist unity can only be unity around the politics of *The Leninist*.

The USSR: epicentre of crisis

Having looked at the collapse of 'official communism' in Britain, it is essential to remember that the collapse is worldwide; and while its results have been most dramatic in Eastern Europe, the collapse of 'official communism' undoubtedly has its epicentre in the Soviet Union.

October has given way to counterrevolutionary Gorbachevism and the world has been plunged into a period of reaction. We must face this unflinchingly. Our motto must be: "Do not cry, do not laugh, but understand" (Spinoza). Communists prefer the truth, no matter how unpleasant, to wishful thinking. We take the world as it is, not the world as we would like it to be.

If we cannot face up to counterrevolution that is unfolding in the USSR today and understand why it happened, then we can hardly put ourselves in a position to carry out the revolution in Britain tomorrow, let alone complete the world revolution.

In the light of Gorbachevism, it is surely correct to ask ourselves how much longer the Soviet Union will remain the world's revolutionary centre - the country where the class struggle of the workers is at the highest point? Surely, unless something very dramatic and very positive happens in the USSR, like a proletarian political revolution, then the banner must pass to new hands.

Whose hands, we can't tell at the moment. Nevertheless, it can't be denied that the Soviet Union is at the centre of the crisis of 'official communism'. October has been thrown into reverse. The revolutionary wave that exploded on the world in 1917, that dominated and shaped the polities of the 20th century, has run out of all momentum and is now in rapid retreat.

So why has this reversal happened? Subjectively, prime responsibility must be placed on the shoulders of the leaders of the Soviet Union. After the death of Lenin, both their theory and practice rapidly diverged from Marxism-Leninism and headed towards revisionism, a process which has culminated in Gorbachevism.

Of course, here we aren't simply talking about the mistakes and crimes of this or that individual. These leaders of the Soviet Union were, in the last analysis, the representatives of an emerging bureaucratic caste that has gone from being a relative fetter on the development of socialism to the point where, under the leadership of Gorbachev, all remaining gains of October are under threat.

Today a whole layer of the bureaucracy wants to transform itself into a new capitalist class (as they are doing in Poland, Hungary and Czechoslovakia - in spite of being catapulted from political power through crushing electoral defeats). Only this stratum and the mafiosa are in a position to take full advantage of privatisation of the economy; only they have large quantities of loot stashed away and readily available.

Although there are some who would have us believe otherwise, the bureaucracy was never a ruling class. It never had deep social roots. Its social position and ideology was never spontaneously reproduced in society. It was always a parasitic, and therefore highly unstable, outgrowth on the body of the proletarian state, which it slowly suffocated and killed.

Hence, when the topmost layer of this outgrowth felt compelled to start a controlled counterrevolution from above, under the guise of 'market socialism', it has been answered from below by all sorts of uncontrollable centrifugal counterrevolutionary currents: not least in the form of nationalism, as the republican level bureaucracy/new capitalist class tries to find a popular base and carve out a home market. That is the significance of Yeltsin - and his alter egos at every other level throughout the disintegrating Soviet Union.

There are vital lessons for communists to be learned from the consolidation, and now collapse, of bureaucratic socialism.

Mass soviet democracy, freedom of debate, real elections, a powerful workers' militia and the limitation of the pay of all elected officials to that of the average skilled worker - these are not luxuries, but essential to combat bureaucracy and advance socialism. They did not happen in the Soviet Union. This not only meant that the mass of the population became alienated from their own state,

but also that the economy gradually stagnated; it was this that acted as the spur for a section of the bureaucracy to throw in its lot with international imperialism and turn to 'market socialism'.

Bureaucratic socialism might have been effective (if not efficient) in carrying out what has been called 'primitive socialist accumulation' - ie laying the basis of heavy industry in a very backward country (first in the early 1930s, and then again after the massive destruction of World War II). But as soon as that essentially bourgeois task was completed, the lack of democracy, initiative, innovation, identification and debate inherent in bureaucratic socialism meant that the Soviet Union and the other socialist states grouped around it could not fully master, integrate and take advantage of the on-going qualitative development of the productive forces (computer, laser, micro, bio, robot, etc, technology).

As a result, the Soviet Union went from closing the gap between it and the advanced capitalist countries, to a position of increasing relative decline. In the end, both the leaders of the Soviet Union and the led came to see a return to capitalism as the only way out of the impasse.

Yet, the reason the Soviet Union suffered this fate, the reason bureaucracy triumphed and capitalism is returning, has got nothing to do with a failure of socialism; rather, the isolation of socialism in a backward country. Socialism is a transitional form of society, that might have first found its expression in imperialism's weak links - which were invariably backward - but, in essence, real socialism takes as its starting point the highest level of production capitalism has achieved.

The contradiction in the world between the massive growth in the productive forces and the crippling capitalist social relations (along with the inevitable threat of world war and general crisis crash) calls for world socialism and communism. Prime responsibility for the fact that this call hasn't been answered, again rests with communists in the Soviet Union.

The struggle to spread the October Revolution to the other countries of the world, above all to the advanced capitalist countries, was first held back and then diverted by the 'we can build full socialism/communism by ourselves' line of Stalin and his heirs. It justified turning the Comintern and its national sections into an arm of Soviet state diplomacy. Because of the immense power and prestige of the Soviet Union, this was duly done - but at a price.

Wanting to conclude deals with the democratic capitalist powers against the fascist capitalist powers, the world's communist parties were used as pawns in the diplomatic game. One step to the right had to follow another.

The resulting popular fronts with the bourgeoisie led to support for 'our' bourgeoisie during imperialist war, and finally, the disintegration into the arms of the bourgeoisie which we have just been dealing with. The leaders of the Soviet Union thus compounded its isolation and its present day crisis.

Of course, it was a close run thing. Socialism could have quickly come to dominate the commanding heights of the world economy and been characterised by advancement rather than backwardness. Russia sparked a revolutionary flame that spread throughout Europe and Asia - crucially Germany, the most advanced country in continental Europe. It was the inexperience of the communists and the treachery of the social democrats, who in Germany drowned the revolution in the blood of the workers, not least Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht, that left socialism isolated in the Soviet Union and produced the excruciating bureaucratic deformations that, in turn, disarmed and disorientated the world's communists and strengthened the hand of international imperialism.

Given this, what is remarkable is not that the forces of capitalism are re-asserting themselves in the Soviet Union. What is remarkable is that bureaucratic socialism was able to survive so long.

Survive, after the devastation of civil war and wars of intervention; survive, to establish heavy industry; survive, to spread its form of socialism after nearly going down to the German invasion; survive forty years of Cold War as a superpower. For all its horrors, for all the ignominy of its present day collapse, the fight to survive was, in its own way, heroic.

If bureaucratic, backward, socialism can survive in isolation for so long and present such a challenge to imperialism, we can have every confidence in the dynamism, tenacity and ultimate triumph of advanced socialism.

'Official communism' and the period of reaction

'Official communism' is going through a 1914 type crisis, though on an even higher level, involv-

ing, as it does, states as well as parties. The involvement of states meant that the collapse of the 'official' world communist movement was slow - a death by a thousand cuts. Nevertheless, whatever the dynamics, we must be clear that what remains of 'official communism' is collapsing to the right, into the camp of the bourgeoisie.

Although many of the 'official communist' parties now denounce 'the Brezhnev period', 'lack of workers' democracy', 'bureaucratic socialism' and 'bureaucratic centralism', etc, this is not an 11th hour conversion to Leninism. We can see the truth of this in the response to the counterrevolutions in Eastern Europe. They haven't turned round and said 'Comrades of *The Leninist*, yes you were right all the way along, you warned us of the danger of counterrevolution in the socialist countries, not least when you warned about the danger coming from above and below'. No, they've adopted the titles and terminology of social democracy.

This has nothing to do with some sort of return to the honourable tradition of the parties of the Second International before 1914. No, the new politics of what were the parties of 'official communism' are the dishonourable, pro-imperialist, pro-capitalist politics of social democracy post 1914.

Thus, when the former 'official communists' in Poland rename themselves the Social Democracy of Poland, what they have in mind is not the party of Rosa Luxemburg and Leo Jogiches. They have in mind the present day social democracy of Sweden, Germany and France. The same in what used to be the GDR, with the Party of Democratic Socialism, and the socialist parties of Bulgaria, Romania and Hungary. We know that the name changes of 'official communism' are real: 1989 proves that 'official communist' opportunism can change its spots and become a new form of social democratic opportunism.

In Britain the social democratisation of 'official communism' was bound to take the form of organisational as well as political liquidation. Here the communist movement has always been small - even if, on occasion, highly influential - and the Labour Party (the social democratic party), big. In terms of social weight it does not bear comparison with the former Communist Party of Italy or, for that matter, communist parties that used to exercise state power. So in Britain it is hardly surprising that the debate that has exercised the Euros was bound to be more than a name change and a change of terminology.

As well as the courtship of the CPB by the NCP, with the aim of creating a Frankenstein monster of a party (made out of this and that bit of yesterday's revisionism), there is the Euro camp. It is run by a debate between those who want to embrace Labourism, Scottish nationalism, eco-feminism and the social market in a new federal organisation, and those who simply want to shut up shop. The latter obviously have their minds on higher things, like picking up fat cheques from the BBC, ITV and the publications of Rupert Murdoch.

As we have argued, the collapse of bureaucratic socialism and the social democratisation of 'official communism' goes hand in hand with a worldwide period of reaction.

The liquidation of 'official communism' is not the result of some private argument. It is not something that only affects the working class. Communism as an ideology was always the mortal enemy of the bourgeoisie. Bureaucratic socialism was seen as its deadly manifestation. No wonder, then, that the capitalist class imagines its ideas and values have been vindicated and are destined to reconquer the world.

The spectre that haunted the bourgeoisie with every step forward it took against feudal backwardness, that took material form in 1871, and then again in 1905, 1917 and 1918, that seemed to threaten from all sides during the 1920s - that spectre has been exorcised. We are now, apparently, at the 'end of history', the end of the class struggle.

Such triumphal theorising is easy to dismiss as throw away millenarianism. But that would be to miss its significance. The idea that communism has failed might warm the hearts of the bourgeoisie; undoubtedly, though, it also affects the minds of the working class, rebellious youth and anybody who looks at this rotten society and wants to change it.

The bourgeoisie is today able to turn around, seemingly without fear of being contradicted, and say, 'Look what happened last time you tried to change society! Millions of people died! It ended in disappointment, disarray, in the recognition that capitalism and the market is the natural order of things. So don't try it all again!'

This is what makes the period we have entered different from other periods of reaction. Indeed, it makes it a period of reaction of a special type. The renewed confidence of the bourgeoisie and the

collapse of working class organisations in Britain, Europe and around the world, are not the direct results of the power of the bourgeoisie in terms of its armed might. The most prominent feature of this period is the seeming triumph of bourgeois ideas. Of course, this has a material base. It's not that we've been pitted against the bourgeoisie in some sort of *Mastermind* contest and they've come out on top. Quite frankly, their ideas are rather pathetic and shop-soiled.

The material origins of this period of reaction of a special type lie in the isolation of the world revolution in the Soviet Union, and now its resulting collapse. However special it is, though, this period of reaction can only be a passing phase. Capitalism hasn't got the answers to humanity's problems.

The sort of capitalism that is being restored in Eastern Europe and the USSR will quickly dispel the illusions the masses there currently have. They imagine that what they are going to get is West German style living standards and Swedish style social democracy. What they will actually get is South American or Turkish style capitalism: a barbaric style of capitalism which produces mass poverty and relies on death squads, disappearing people and censorship to maintain the status quo.

If there is hunger and mass homelessness in the cities of the United States (we are told by comrades there that the problem is even greater than here), which is the richest country on the planet, what's going to happen in the former socialist countries? Surely we are going to see this crime against humanity in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, but writ ten times, or a hundred times, larger.

Poland shows the way things are going. People are already sleeping en masse on railway platforms, unemployment is spiralling upwards, the shops are full but few can afford what's in them, anti-semitism is becoming rife and Lech Walesa is running for the presidency on a platform of open admiration of Marshal Pilsudski, the fascistic dictator who ran Poland in the 1920s and 30s.

Throughout Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union the forces of darkness are on the march. In lockstep with capitalism, irrationality has returned in a wide variety of forms; the Iron Guard and Pamiat, Jew baiting and ethnic violence, bans on abortion and religious superstition (Moscow's first post-1917 commodity exchange was opened in the old Comecon building by a Russian Orthodox priest praying to the god of profit).

Sooner, rather than later, the working class will organise and strike back - firstly, as a class in itself, recognising its own basic economic interests, its need for employment, for housing, for food. Then, after ruthlessly criticising its own first efforts - their paltriness, their meanness, their half heartedness - it will return to the task of socialism and its historic mission of human liberation.

Capitalism is not the future: it leads to war

It is quite clear that capitalism isn't the future. Capitalism can't even guarantee today's miserable level of culture. Under capitalism, much of Eastern Europe is about to join the so-called Third World, and even in Western Europe and North America it is important to realise that the living standards we 'enjoy', our supposed 'privileges', our democratic rights, our liberties, are under threat because of capitalism.

These gains have not only come from the imperialist table, they haven't only come because of the organised struggle of the working class. At least in part the welfare state, free state education, the right to demonstrate and so on, owe their existence to the living alternative to capitalism represented by socialism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

As long as there were socialist states in the world, then the bosses had a certain interest in gaining consent to their rule by showing that the west was better in terms of living standards, democratic liberties, etc. There is no need to do that any longer. If capitalism is the only system, it has no need to show that it is the best system.

On top of this, we must bear in mind that capitalism in the west, and restored capitalism in the east, is on the brink of the most devastating general crisis of capitalism ever. All we know about the mechanism and laws of motion of capitalism tells us that.

So, from every direction, our living standards - low, though they are in objective terms, low in terms of what we need - and our democratic liberties - formal, as they mask who really runs society - will be attacked. And for basically the same reason that capitalism will not bring economic plenty, neither will it bring peace.

It was the ability of the Soviet Union to militarily balance the US that prevented a World War III.

With the Soviet Union in decline and disintegration, inter-imperialist contradictions will come to the fore of world politics. There will be a scramble for Eastern Europe and the USSR. This will not only exacerbate inter-imperialist contradictions. It will also exacerbate the uneven development of the major imperialist powers. Undoubtedly, well before this finds open expression in a world war of revision to take into account the new relative strengths of imperialism, it will find concealed expression, not least in the form of war involving medium developed countries, countries trapped on the threshold of imperialism.

We can clearly see the crystallisation of three incipient rival imperialist blocs: Europe, east and west, led by German imperialism; Japan, and in its train the South Korean, Taiwanese and Singese eastern dragons; and North America, dominated by the United States. Within those coalescing trade blocs, we see the seeds of future trade wars and eventual world war.

There are those who say that, with the demise of the Warsaw Pact as a military alliance, the US/USSR arms deals and the so-called New Political Thinking of Gorbachev, we have entered (yet another) epoch of peace. If only! As we have always insisted, the idea that the danger of war had its origin in the face off between two hostile social systems was a complete misconception. There is no need to go into a lengthy theoretical explanation. Even before the end of the Cold War was officially declared, the Persian Gulf has seen the build up for what could be world Falklands.

Both sides are capitalist and are driven by the imperatives of capitalism. US imperialism is not out to liberate 'poor little Kuwait', nor remove a regional dictator. Rather, it would impose a new form of colonialism and reverse its decline relative to Germany and Japan. With the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the US is presented with a window of opportunity (a number of authoritative sources say the US set up Saddam Hussein in true Machiavellian style).

A US 'liberation' of Kuwait, and invasion and takeover of Iraq, would therefore be as much against Japan and Germany as Saddam Hussein (with the added irony that, where, in the Cold War, the US was the main paymaster but Germany and Japan will be the greatest beneficiaries, at this moment in time the US is able to get Japan and Germany to cough up for its attempt to reassert its world leadership).

A *Pax Americana* in Iraq would put the US in a position where it could redivide the whole of the Middle East in its image and interests. This would give the US control of half the world's oil production. A victorious Gulf War would thus put it in a stronger position vis-a-vis oil dependent Germany and Japan.

That should not lead us to side with Iraq and call for a Saddam Hussein victory. Iraq is not fighting imperialism. Iraq wants to join the imperialist club as a junior partner - a Ba'athist utopian dream maybe, but one that flows from capitalist economic and political necessity. Economically, Iraq has, after all, reached the stage where finance capital dominates, where its ruling class needs to become imperialist or face civil war.

No genuine communist, or even consistent democrat, should give any support whatsoever to imperialism or the proto-imperialism of Iraq. Neither Bush nor Hussein are squaring up to fight a just war, and we should organise appropriately.

Frankly, we don't think there is anything appropriate in Britain about backing UN sanctions against Iraq and calling for the restoration of the feudal al-Sabahs. What we should be fighting for is the right of the Arab, Kurdish, Turkic, Persian and other peoples of the region to redraw the map as they think fit, not the resurrection of an imperialist created artificial fiefdom state.

Anyone in the workers' movement who recognises the aims of US imperialism in particular, let alone the nature of imperialism in general, should also recognise that UN sanctions against Iraq are, in reality, nothing more than a form of imperialist economic warfare.

As we have argued, what is needed in Britain is not a pacifist peace movement which advises imperialism that its best interests would be served through starving Iraq instead of bombing it. What is needed is a revolutionary peace movement - a movement which dares put forward the demand for the withdrawal of all imperialist forces from the Gulf and dares to make that demand real through fighting for everything from trade union resolutions to militant demonstrations, from blocking arms and war supplies to encouraging servicemen to mutiny and rebel. That is the way to stop war. That is what the Internationalist Committee sponsored by *The Leninist* is committed to build.

Certainly the workers, Kurds and oppressed masses in Iraq should not 'suspend' their revolutionary struggle and enter into a 'military united front' with the Ba'athist regime, as some advise. They have every reason to use Saddam Hussein's

SUPPLEMENT

present difficulties as their opportunity - their opportunity to make revolution in Iraq that leads uninterruptedly to socialism. That would be the best possible service the masses of Iraq could do for the world's working class.

In contrast to others who say the Iraqi working class must wait for the proletariat in the western metropoles, we say that countries like Iraq are the cutting edge of the world revolution at the present stage. In such countries we see the contradictions of capitalism in their sharpest form, not only the contradiction between the working class and the ruling monopoly bourgeoisie, but also between aspirant imperialism and established imperialism, a contradiction that finds its highest expression in the form of war.

And as much as the CND types thought that the danger of nuclear war had been banished, it is quite clear that the Americans are trying to manipulate public opinion into accepting not only a horrendously destructive conventional war, but a nuclear war. Saddam Hussein promises, if attacked, to take the conflict to Saudi Arabia and Israel, unleash biological and chemical weapons, destroy oil wells and generally unleash mayhem. Such wild threats are music to US imperialist ears. The US is just itching for an excuse to bring into play its nuclear arsenal.

The danger of such an awful outburst is not confined to the Persian Gulf. Iraq is not alone in being a medium developed capitalist country which will seek to become imperialist through conquest. US relative decline will also continue to drive it ever more towards trying to reassert its position through war. Thus the present conflict between Iraq and the US should be seen as a taste of things to come.

We are not, repeat not, on the threshold of some capitalist golden age. The question before humanity - as Marx, Engels, Lenin and Luxemburg said - is *socialism or barbarism*.

Reforge the Communist Party

Because we understand that capitalism poses before humanity the stark choice of socialism or barbarism, we have dedicated ourselves to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. Without such a party our class can do nothing decisive. Workers can make gains, but these can only be temporary. As we have argued, because of the related collapse of bureaucratic socialism and prospect of a new general crisis of capitalism, the whole of culture, accumulated over seven thousand years of civilisation, is now under threat.

Only the Communist Party can prevent capitalism plunging the world into crisis and war, because only the Communist Party can lead the working class in a revolution that will smash capitalism. Of course, the Communist Party is not a fairy godmother or a magic potion. It is not a substitute for the self activity of the working class; rather, the vital prerequisite for successful struggle.

Without a Communist Party, any anti-imperialist sentiments that exist in the working class movement in Britain can only have a negligible effect. For the working class in Britain, therefore, to carry out its proletarian internationalist duty, in a full sense rather than just verbally, what it needs is a reformed Communist Party. To the extent that we reforge this Party and develop it as a powerful vanguard of our class, to that extent can we carry out our proletarian internationalist duties.

So how does our struggle to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain stand?

In November 1981 we launched *The Leninist*. Its launch was an act of disciplined communist rebellion, and represented the only serious challenge to Euro revisionism and centrist plotting. Where these forces relied on bourgeois society to give them direction, or the latest twist in Soviet foreign policy, our entire strategy was based on developing Marxism-Leninism and launching an open ideological struggle to fight opportunism and win new communist forces. Where the opportunists have failed, we have been vindicated.

Our firm theory enabled us to deliver blow after blow against opportunism, and while others have gone down, we have gathered strength through an active intervention in the class struggle.

Progress we might have made, but sufficient progress we have not.

Our organisation remains painfully weak and in many areas of the country non-existent. There are a number of reasons why we are not as strong as we need to be. But perhaps the most important is that since our very beginning we've had to fight against the stream. All around us there has been the disintegration and ideological decay of the official communist movement in Britain. On top of that there must be added the decade of Thatcherism, during which our class suffered one defeat

after another.

Nonetheless, however much they have cost us in terms of hard work and precious resources, we have made important steps forward in our struggle to reforge the Communist Party of Great Britain. There have been many milestones in this struggle and I'm pleased to announce that we've reached another one.

Yesterday, comrades, the Fifth Conference of the Leninists took place. The conference discussed one resolution, the subject matter of which was the name of our organisation.

I will now read the resolution.

Our Name

The Euro Executive Committee, meeting over the first weekend of September, unanimously voted to recommend to their December 8-9 42nd Congress that all reference to "communism" be dropped in the renaming of their organisation.

That the Euros are completing their transformation into an openly bourgeois trend at this moment in time comes as no surprise. Due to the ignominious collapse of bureaucratic socialism and "official communism" in Eastern Europe and the counter-revolutionary process unfolding in the USSR, the world has been plunged into a period of ideological reaction. The leaders and propagandists of capitalism are brimming with confidence. They have triumphantly declared that communism and Marxism-Leninism - capitalism's mortal enemy - is dead. For the moment at least, they therefore no longer need tame "communists" like the Euros.

Neither Marxism-Leninism nor communism is dead. Marxism-Leninism lives because it is true. Only by using the scientific method first developed by Karl Marx can we really understand the present 1914-type general crisis of bureaucratic socialism and the "official" world communist movement. Only by using Marxism can we understand that, far from the west's victory in the Cold War ending capitalism's antagonistic contradictions, they are growing ever more pronounced. And only using Marxism can we end capitalism: a system which, in spite of its claims that it will bring peace and plenty, will only bring mass unemployment, starvation and the threat of nuclear holocaust. Capitalism is a decadent system which long ago outlived its usefulness. Communism still represents the future of humanity.

The Euros have never had the slightest legitimacy in using the proud name of our Party, the Communist Party of Great Britain. Only a disciplined party steeled in Marxist-Leninist ideology deserves to be called the Communist Party.

In the light of the Euros' decision to change their name, our organisation will no longer call itself the Communist Party of Great Britain (*The Leninist*). *The Leninist* will remain the central organ of our Party but we no longer need a suffix in order to distinguish ourselves from the Euro traitors. From now on we will simply call ourselves the Communist Party of Great Britain. That name must not be abandoned, to be buried by the Euros or taken over by one or the other crisis ridden "official communist" rumps.

Our main task remains reforging the CPGB. Although we have the name of the Party, the Party itself has been liquidated. This situation has to be, and will be, reversed. At the moment, however, our organisation remains painfully weak and, in most areas of the country, non-existent. Therefore, in order to indicate what stage we are at, and what tasks we have ahead of ourselves, the leadership of our organisation will use the name Provisional Central Committee.

There is clearly a burning need for a strong Communist Party. Without a strong Party the working class is nothing, with it everything. That is why our central overriding aim remains reforging the Communist Party of Great Britain. The CPGB will not be reforged through uniting the various opportunist fragments of "official communism". No, a strong Communist Party will only be built on the solid foundations of Marxism-Leninism and through taking the consistent organisational and ideological struggle we have been waging since November 1981 to new heights. A landmark in this will be the coming publication of a draft programme of the CPGB around which genuine communist forces can be won and trained.

The programme will be finalised, and the provisional nature of our leadership ended, at a re-founding congress of the CPGB which we will call as soon as the basis for such a qualitative development has been laid.

Now that the Euro organisation has given up pretending to have anything to do with communism, this conference of Leninists instructs it to hand over all Party property, files and records. The Euros have betrayed all the principles on which

our Party was founded in July 1920, everything that was good and fine in our Party's history and tradition. Their right over Party property, files and records exists only in bourgeois law.

Any remaining communists in the Euro organisation or the other "official communist" rumps should now act under the leadership and discipline of the CPGB. We call upon these comrades, along with all those communists who have left or been driven out of the CPGB by opportunism, to join us in the great work that lies ahead. Together we can build the strong Communist Party our class needs.

Our tasks 1991

The resolution was passed unanimously by the conference in a spirit of determination and militancy. All comrades recognised that it is of far more than symbolic importance. It represents a real step forward in our struggle for communism, because without the Communist Party there can be no successful struggle for communism.

However, as the resolution makes clear, taking the name of the Party and being the Party are not the same things. We must give the name of the Communist Party real content.

Because at the moment our Party exists only in nucleus, we cannot emphasise too strongly that our main task remains reforging it. We will not fall into the trap of so many left organisations, who imagine that merely with a name change they become a party, ie the leading section of the proletarian vanguard.

Giving content to our strategy of reforging the Communist Party was therefore included in the conference agenda, under the heading 'Our Tasks 1991'. We have ambitious plans, comrades.

By the end of 1991 we hope to have laid the financial, technical and political basis for our own communist printworks. This will greatly enhance our organisational capabilities. But at the centre of all our work is the question of programme.

In early 1991 we aim to publish a major pamphlet, *Which Road?*, which will be our definitive critique of existing and past opportunist programmes. Later in the year this pamphlet will be joined by our own draft programme around which we will rally and train a new generation of communists. In due course, and no doubt after much debate, this draft programme, and all the amendments to it, will be submitted to a refounding congress of the CPGB for finalisation.

We also discussed plans for the development of our campaigning work.

The Hands Off Ireland! solidarity campaign is of great importance to us, not least the demonstration next year to mark the 75th anniversary of the Easter Rising in Dublin. Ireland is an acid test of proletarian internationalism, and while our organisation has done some splendid work, the objective situation cries out for this to be qualitatively lifted. The same applies to the Internationalist Committee on the Gulf. The Internationalist Committee is the only campaigning centre which takes a consistently principled line, which does not fall into the trap of either fostering pacifistic illusions or projecting Saddam Hussein as leading some sort of just war. Another area which we want to highlight, to bring back to the fore of our work, is the Unemployed Workers Charter.

The economic prospects of British capitalism are bleak. All pundits agree that unemployment will start to spiral up past the two million mark in the very near future. In step with this, the TUC has decided to complete its betrayal of the unemployed. It has withdrawn all funding to the remaining tea and ping pong unemployed centres as a cost cutting measure. A political vacuum exists, and is waiting for us to fill it. We must ensure that the unemployed are given organisation, and unemployment becomes a crucial question for our class. This will include a militant mass lobby of the 1991 TUC in Glasgow. The UWC will also take the plight of the unemployed to the top of the political agenda in the forthcoming general election as an integral part of our overall intervention as the Provisional Central Committee of the CPGB.

Having mentioned the coming general election, let's turn to the discussion we had on this at the conference. In the past our intervention in general elections lacked incisiveness, lacked concreteness. It was correct, and remains correct, to say: fight whoever wins! But simply leaving it at that, as we did, veered dangerously near to boycottism - something we were never happy about, reflecting as it did our organisational weakness and inability to give a real lead in such moments of mass political activity (even if voting is passive, no one should downplay its importance to the mass of the population).

Although we recognise that parliament is "a weapon of falsehood, deception and violence, a

place of enervating chaff", in the not too distant future what we must see is a nationwide communist election campaign run by a reformed CPGB in a large number of constituencies, even in a majority of them - not with the aim of securing MPs, rather with the aim of mobilising the masses for revolution. As a first step towards that, our conference discussed two tactics: a general tactic, and a specific tactic.

Let's begin with the general. As comrades will have seen from the last issue of *The Leninist* we will urge workers across Britain to take a stand against all the parties of the bourgeoisie, against the Tories, the Liberals and the Labour Party. Kinnock's bourgeois workers' party is not offering the country socialism of any sort, but a watered down Thatcherism - Thatcherism with a human face.

What we need to do therefore is pose in the sharpest way possible the need for a revolutionary communist alternative. We will be doing that through a campaign for voters to write "communist" across their ballot papers. However inadequate this is, and it is, it has the virtue of being positive compared with simply saying 'fight whoever wins', and is open to some sort of calculation.

Now on to our specific tactic. As long as the Tories don't decide to go for a snap election, say in February or May 1991, we intend to stand a small number of communist candidates in England, Scotland and Wales. Not in opposition to, but as an integral part of, our campaigning work on issues like the Gulf, poll tax, Ireland and unemployment.

The Euro organisation has promised the Labour Party that it will not be standing any candidates in any forthcoming election; the NCP refuses to stand any candidates as a matter of principle; and the CPB is all at sixes and sevens, and is anyway set for total disintegration. Apart from the fact that if any of these "official communist" rumps were to stand in a general election they would be doing so on a reformist platform, what this cries out for is positive action by us. The population must be made aware that although Eurocommunism might be dead, the Communist Party isn't; that there is an alternative to capitalist politics and capitalism, and that alternative is a growing, determined force, ready to lead and ready to succeed.

Of course, we don't expect to hold the balance of power in a hung parliament, because we don't expect any of our candidates to win; indeed we know that they will all lose their deposits. That is unfortunate, but the reason we are standing is to make revolutionary anti-capitalist, anti-parliamentary propaganda, and to rebuild our Party.

What we have been describing is, in terms of what our class needs, very modest. However, we must take into account the period we are living in - a period of reaction - and the resources we have, not least human forces, and crucially, communist cadres.

It has to be admitted that, in this respect, we are very thin on the ground. This is a major problem. I think it was Stalin who, in the mid-1930s, coined the slogan "cadres decide everything". When we look at the gap that still exists between our correct political line and the ineffectiveness of our practical work, we can only echo this slogan.

Consequently, as well as constantly striving to develop our cadres through day to day practical work, we will, as we did last year, place a great deal of emphasis in 1991 on the theoretical education of comrades. Central to this will be our second international school in early 1991. This will build on the achievements of the 1990 school and take on board its lessons (as well as a basic one week school, we intend to organise specialist courses for a second week).

I would also like to extend here and now a warm invitation to our friends and co-thinkers in Turkey, Iran, Ireland and the United States. These comrades played an invaluable role in our 1990 school. We are sure they will do the same in 1991. While I trust that they learned something from us, there can be no doubt that we learned a great deal from them. In the process, the bonds of proletarian internationalism were given real meaning. These bonds will be further strengthened in 1991.

Comrades, we have a great deal of work ahead of us. We live in difficult but exciting and challenging times.

Bureaucratic socialism might have failed, but the world needs socialism as never before. "Official communism" might have gone over to the class enemy, but the workers need real communist leadership. The Tory government has delivered blow after blow against our class, but the spirit of resistance is rising.

All this calls out for a reformed Communist Party of Great Britain! Let us take up the banner of the CPGB founded in July 1920, the banner of October, the banner of Leninism!

- Long live the CPGB!
- Long live the working class!
- Long live communism!

HANDS OFF IRELAND!

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 1990

No. 5

FREE DESSIE ELLIS! FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS!

DESSIE ELLIS was extradited because he is Irish. No more than that. For Britain to pursue its war in Ireland, it must criminalise the Irish people. Dessie is the latest in the long line of Irish people who have been treated to what the British press so often assures us is the "finest system of justice in the world".

Well before he had been extradited to Britain, the media propaganda machine had gone into motion, fixing him in the public eye as an 'IRA bomber'. It is obvious that the sort of 'justice' he can expect is Birmingham Six style 'justice'.

Dessie is being charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. The evidence on this was unearthed at a time when he had been in custody for two years in Ireland. The fact that it is therefore impossible for him to have been involved in this should not lead to a complacent attitude. The Winchester Three were jailed for life on even more scanty evidence, forcing us to the conclusion that their real 'crime' was being on Tom King's land 'in possession of an offensive accent'. Conspiracy charges put the onus of proof on the accused. "Innocent until

proven guilty" does not apply here, especially if you are Irish. It is hypocritical beyond belief that, while protesting at the framing of the Birmingham Six by the British state, the Twenty-six County government should hand an Irish republican over on a plate to be tried by that same state. After over a month on hunger strike, Dessie was taken by stretcher to a Royal Air Force helicopter to be flown to a British jail. It is rather ironic that he should be flown from an airport named after Roger Casement, himself executed by Britain in 1916 for assisting the struggle for Irish freedom. Worse still, on his arrival in Britain, the state which had extradited him offered him a visit from its embassy, as one of its citizens!

Clearly, the southern Irish government is no friend of Irish freedom. It grumbles about the Birmingham Six, while creating



new Birmingham Six type cases.

It seems possible that the Six will be released before Christmas. This is a pyrrhic victory. Sure, they'll be free - after 16 years! Sixteen days would have been too long. Britain can hold this up as an example of

what happens if you are in any way associated with those who resist its rule. No doubt that old vulture, Lord Denning, will add that they should thank Britain that they weren't hanged.

Dessie Ellis must not be left in the same situation. It was obvious that the southern Irish government was not going to free him. Only those who have an interest in his freedom, and of exposing British hypocrisy, can do that. That is working class people. You.

Dessie can be freed, and the British state beaten, but only by a campaign rooted in the working class and prepared to fight back. We need to argue that Dessie

isn't in jail because of any "error of judgement", as Labour MP Chris Mullen said of the Birmingham Six. You don't have to go to the Lebanon to find hostages. Dessie is a political hostage of British imperialism against the Irish people.

This doesn't just extend to people like him and the Birmingham Six - people who have obviously been fitted up. The many hundreds of other republican and republican socialist prisoners of war in Britain's jails are there because they have fought back. All political prisoners are there because of Britain's dirty war in Ireland. To fight for Dessie's release we must understand this. Our enemy is the whole British state, not the three sorry coppers which are being scapegoated at the moment for jailing the Guildford Four.

Dessie Ellis is innocent. He is being framed. *That* is a central feature of any campaign for his freedom. But there is no such thing as a guilty Irish political prisoner. British 'justice' has no right to any Irish or working class person.

David Rhys

**Troops Out Now!
Self Determination for the Irish Nation!**

Death squad

ON TUESDAY October 9, 1990, a British army death squad executed two Volunteers from the Tyrone Brigade, IRA. Dessie Grew and Martin McCaughey were on active service when they were shot dead near isolated farm buildings at Lisnasley, County Armagh.

Immediately after the shootings, the RUC issued a highly ambiguous statement. Although it said three guns were recovered from the area, it did not specify whether the Volunteers were armed or had opened fire. This line was continued by the media, which, instead of focussing on the circumstances of the killings, concentrated on the allegations of "terrorist activity" made against the two men by the British state. These allegations were described by Gerry Adams as "nothing but a nakedly propagandistic attempt to justify their killings".

On Monday November 10, Alec Patterson, an Irish National Liberation Army Volunteer, was shot dead in similar circumstances. The Inla defiantly responded that it expected no quarter from British imperialism; nor should they expect any back.

Since 1983, 19 members of the Tyrone Brigade have been gunned down by the forces of British imperialism. The most devastating of these incidents took place at Loughall. Despite so-called official 'investigations' and denials that have camouflaged the blood-stained hands of British imperialism, all genuine partisans in the struggle for Irish freedom recognise that these and other incidents are evidence of the existence of a shoot-to-kill policy being operated by the British state. This policy is not just con-

fined to the six counties, but also extends into Europe. This is evidenced by the shooting of Mairead Farrell, Sean Savage, and Dan McCann, who were all unarmed, in Gibraltar.

Hands Off Ireland! salutes the commitment and sacrifice given by Inla Volunteer Alec Patterson, and IRA Volunteers Dessie Grew and Martin McCaughey. They made the ultimate sacrifice in the revolutionary anti-imperialist struggle being waged in the Six Counties.

Dessie Grew came from a family that had suffered greatly as a result of the British occupation. Their family home had been attacked on several occasions in the past. Dessie's eldest brother, Seamus, was murdered by another British death squad in December 1982. During his involvement with the Republican Movement, he had been imprisoned four times for a total of twelve years. Martin McCaughey's dedication to the struggle was also unquestionable. He had joined the IRA at the age of sixteen and until his death had been involved in many operations. Earlier this year he played a vital role in a shoot-out with undercover soldiers in Cappagh, which ended in the death of two members of the occupying forces.

The harassment of the families continued up to and after the funerals. The agents of British imperialism, the RUC, hounded and attempted to intimidate people attending the burials.

Nick Clarke

A monopoly on solidarity ...?

ON NOVEMBER 5, supporters of Hands Off Ireland! joined a picket of Astra Pyrotechnics, the munitions group responsible in the past for the manufacture of plastic bullets, but more well known as producers of fireworks. The picket had been organised by the Troops Out Movement and advertised in the London area as an open event.

HOI! supporters were therefore surprised when they began to set up banners, placards etc, to be approached by one of the TOM stewards with the information that only placards and banners provided by the organisers would be "permitted" on the picket. We were also informed at this point that our comrades could not even stand with their papers on display.

Meanwhile, a few HOI! supporters were stationed away from the picket to sell copies of our paper while the situation was clarified with TOM stewards. This provoked a call via the TOM megaphone steward for our comrades to "respect" the wishes of TOM to keep the event apolitical.

Not satisfied with this, two TOMers approached one group of our sellers to try to stop them. At this point, despite the fact that the argument had been calm a policeman decided to wander over to express his opinion. Sickeningly, one of the TOM stewards, evidently feeling that no further argument was needed now that a rep of the British state had intervened, pointed at our comrades and said "These people are nothing to do

with the picket", turned quickly on his heel and slithered away.

This, frankly, is disgusting. Genuine supporters of Irish freedom can only question TOM's general commitment to anti-imperialism, if its functionaries are quite happy to see the British police cart off people who happen to disagree with them.

While we were being told that TOM was "refraining" from having any sort of distinct presence on the picket, TOM leaflets, which of course put forward TOM's particular political viewpoint and strategy for "banning" plastic bullets, were being busily distributed. This view, incidentally, is one which refuses to put the use of this weapon by the British army into the context of its occupation of Ireland. This depoliticises any resistance, leaving the liberal TOM to sombrely bemoan their use, without asking 'why'.

At best this is ineffective; at worst it is, frankly, ghoulish.

In view of this hypocritical sectarianism and to avoid any potential of a provocation from the TOM stewards, who had already shown themselves quite happy to see the disagreement between our two organisations resolved by the British state, HOI! gathered its supporters and withdrew from the picket.

We wonder, what would be the attitude of TOM if banners of trade union organisations, including some that might actually organise sections of Astra's workforce, started turning up? Or of Labour Party branches? Would they also be

told to take them down? Or is it that TOM simply never expects to ever be in a position to mobilise anything other than itself? The annual bash outside Astra Pyrotechnics is a safe, cosy little 'protest' for TOMers only. Broader sections of the working class and solidarity movement need not apply.

A clearer illustration of the fact that TOM has in practice given up on its formal commitment to build a "movement" against British imperialism in Ireland would be hard to imagine. Is HOI! being purist over this question? We don't think so.

We would be on much weaker ground if the TOM strategy of liberal demoralisation was actually having some sort of noticeable effect. But no. The really farcical thing about this disgraceful event was that the TOM picket, which they had advertised and (presumably) built for in their own fashion, consisted of a grand total of 15 people. HOI!, which did no mass mobilisation and went along with the presumption of being a contingent on a larger action, sent along 10 people.

HOI!'s campaign against firms that provide aid to the British army of occupation in the North of Ireland is not confined to a picket once a year. Over the coming period, we plan to dramatically increase the profile of our fight for a workers' boycott of the British army (see 'Strike out for Irish freedom' in the last issue). We assure all readers that our pickets, demos or lobbies will never censor those we have differences with in the field of Irish solidarity.

Mark Fischer

Britain's forgotten hostage

The Guildford Four are out. So are the Winchester Three. At the time of going to press, there's talk that the Birmingham Six will spend Christmas outside jail. One woman was stitched up in exactly the same way, 16 years ago, and left to rot in a British prison

ON FEBRUARY 6, 1974 a coach on the M62 exploded. The IRA bomb killed nine soldiers and three civilians.

Ten days later a young woman was arrested at Liverpool while waiting for a boat to Ireland. Judith Ward was already known to police as a republican sympathiser and had been questioned by them before. With pressure mounting on the police to make a quick arrest, Judith Ward was to become the victim of a frame up and show trial, taking the rap for the M62 bomb.

She had been born in 1949 in Stockport. She had worked in the Twenty-six Counties of southern Ireland at Ravensdale riding stables, Co Lough. In 1970 she returned to her home town and joined the Women's Royal Army Corps, but after only eight months she went AWOL and returned to Ravensdale.

At that time the border area was alive with refugees fleeing from the

war in the north. There were also a large number of Sinn Fein members and IRA activists in Dundalk, in whose circles she began to mix. Although she applied to join Sinn Fein, she was not accepted and after two years of drifting around, she returned to Britain.

On arriving, she gave herself up to the WRACs and told army intelligence that she had been working for the IRA. For the next couple of years she led a Walter Mitty type existence, hanging around republican circles and eventually even becoming a member of Sinn Fein in Britain. She was often questioned by the police about her activities and often admitted to involvement in IRA bombings. Yet the police never took these admissions seriously and she was always released.

After being held for two days for the M62 bomb, she 'confessed' and signed a statement to that effect.

The only other 'evidence' against her was her connection with the republican movement, a notebook with republican slogans on it, and a now discredited forensic test on her hand carried out by the now forcibly retired and infamous Dr Frank Skuse, who gave the police similar service in the case of the Birmingham Six.

Within the next few days, police discovered that at the time she was supposed to have planted the bomb on the coach, she was in fact over 100 miles away. She also claimed that a leading Sinn Fein member in Britain, Brendan Magill, had given her the bomb. He was in Ireland at the time.

Rather than have their case collapse around their ears, the police forced Judith Ward to sign a second statement, more vague than the first. In this she confessed to having "sussed out" the coach station for the bombers, and con-

fessed to two other bombings; Euston station in September 1973 and Latimer Defence College in February 1974.

A few hours after the Euston explosion, Judith Ward and a friend turned up and shouted abuse at the police. Both were arrested and questioned, but were released, as the police could find no evidence to link them with the bombing. Her behaviour was hardly likely to be that of a member of an IRA active service unit.

When Ward came to trial there was no evidence against her, apart from the confession. She repudiated this, and a report by a medical officer at Risely Remand Centre on her mental state questioned the credibility of such a statement. The only other evidence was the forensic test. She also had alibis for the days she was alleged to have taken part in the bombings.

Yet she was convicted of mur-

der and sentenced to life plus thirty years. The IRA have always denied that she was in any way involved in the bombings, and do not claim her as a member. As with the Birmingham Six, she was originally a Category A status prisoner, but was 'de-categorised' last year by the home office. In both cases, it is an admission that they have given up the pretence that the prisoners were ever involved in what they have been jailed for.

Judith Ward remains a hostage of British imperialism - a promise by the state to anyone else who may step out of line that the same could well happen to them. It could happen to you. There is only one way to ensure it won't: to take on and win the fight for the liberty of Britain's forgotten hostage. Free Judith Ward!

Mick Kelly

Should we fight to Ban Plastic Bullets?

Since 1975, a total of 14 people have been killed by plastic bullets in Northern Ireland. Seven of these have been children. Thousands of other Irish people have suffered injuries

CONTRARY to the popular misconception, rubber bullets do not just bounce harmlessly off people after delivering the equivalent of a 'clip round the ear'.

These bullets are about 5 ounces in weight and 4 inches long. Made from solid PVC, they leave the muzzle of the special gun designed for their use at a velocity of something like 170mph. If they catch you right, they will kill you. If not, they can cripple, scar or disfigure you for life.

Their image as a 'soft' riot control weapon has been carefully fostered by the British establishment. This allows easier popular acceptance in Britain of their use on the streets of Northern Ireland. The British Army, given the success of the establishment in 'selling' plastic bullets as a 'nice' weapon, feels little or no compunction about letting fly with them in the confrontations they are embroiled in every day on the streets of the North. As the children of the nationalist areas take such a high profile in the baiting and stone attacks on the British, they suffer disproportionately from their use.

Plastic bullets are, then, a lethal complement to the already formidable arsenal of the British imperialist army. So why does HOI! say that we cannot back campaigns to "ban plastic bullets"?

Firstly, who is going to ban them? The British government? But, in stark contrast to organisations like the Troops Out Movement, Hands Off Ireland! says that the British imperialist government can play no progressive role whatsoever in Ireland. Thus we do not

demand that London implement a 'Bill of Rights' for the occupied Six Counties, that it gives a commitment to withdraw, that it implements non-sectarian 'reforms' to clear up the mess it has created, etc, etc.

The British state acts the way it does in the North because of its nature as an imperialist state, not as a result of 'policy'. The only reason the British Army would withdraw plastic bullets would be if it had a reliable, and equally deadly, alternative. After all, plastic bullets themselves superseded rubber bullets in 1978 on the basis of greater 'accuracy'. As An Phoblacht/Republican News recently noted:

"In the wake of increasing public perception of rubber bullets as lethal weapons ... the British government introduced the plastic bullet, claiming that this weapon was less deadly because it was more accurate ... the plastic bullet was in full use by 1978 and in the three years that followed, the British government's cynicism ... was clearly revealed as the death toll rose sharply to 13 and the number of seriously injured escalated into hundreds."

Secondly, as a campaigning slogan, the demand to ban plastic bullets, even on its own reformist basis, is only able to garner some lukewarm liberal support - and not very much of that. It certainly cannot become a mass campaign among the British working class, the only section with an interest in building a mass campaign of Irish solidarity.

Why is this? Simply because British workers are not just 'ignorant' about the situation in the north

of Ireland. They also, for the most part, actively support and identify with the British army of occupation. This unpalatable fact means that workers in Britain remain passive, or even support, the most barbaric acts of imperialist oppression.

Until that support, that political identification, is punctured, British workers will respond to the information delivered to them by such worthies as the TOM that "Plastic Bullets Kill" with the shrug and the flat response, "So what?" While British workers support lead bullets being used in the North of Ireland, they are hardly likely to be too upset about the odd plastic one being fired off.

It is precisely this 'knot' of pro-imperialism that HOI! is dedicated to cutting. The Troops Out Movement has effectively written the working class in this country out of its strategy to get the troops out, leaving ... the British state, which it hopes to corner with a little liberal arm-twisting into "banning plastic bullets" and, naturally, getting the troops out.

Of course, TOM is right: plastic bullets do kill. But then, so do armoured cars and tanks and guns'. Should TOM perhaps initiate a campaign to get the British Army to give these up also and start patrolling the streets of Derry and Belfast with rolled up copies of Janes' Defence Weekly?

We wish them luck. They are going to need it.

Mark Fischer

Hands Off Ireland! members joined other anti-imperialists in a 40-strong picket of Paddington Green police station on November 12 to protest against the detention of a number of people under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. At least 14 people from the Irish communities of Kilburn and Willesden were picked up under the PTA in raids on homes and clubs, during the previous 48 hours. Two women were released without charge on the day of the picket. The picket heard from the husband of one of the women how her house had been broken into, terrorising her and her small children, and how she was later abused in police custody, including strip-searching and being taunted that her children had been taken into care. Others arrested were later released, after Home Secretary David Waddington had signed exclusion order; ie, there is no evidence whatsoever against them, yet they are still subject to Britain's own form of enforced exile. Two men and one woman have now been charged with conspiracy to cause explosions. The whole thing is a British state operation to terrorise the Irish community. The PTA hangs like a sword of Damocles over their heads: step out of line and you're for it! The three charged look set to experience the same British 'justice' as meted out to the Guildford Four, Birmingham Six and Winchester Three ... unless we stop them. A defence campaign has already been established and is determined to fight for their release, and against these attacks on the Irish community. Contact HOI! for details.

On October 3, Hands Off Ireland! took on Hugh-Dykes MP, from Harrow, in debate at Greenhill College, North-West London. About thirty - mainly sixth form - students heard Dykes and David Rhys for HOI! debate the motion, "that the IRA are freedom fighters, not terrorists". No gung-ho Thatcherite, Mr Dykes is a Tory of the fairly 'wet' variety; so much so, that waders were advisable wear for the meeting. Rather than deal with the character and causes of the war in the north of Ireland, he and his supporters chose to focus on individual actions of the IRA which have resulted in civilian casualties, such as the Harrods bomb. This is the normal approach of apologists for Britain, whether they be Tories or 'leftwingers' in the Labour Party. Hands Off Ireland! emphasised that the British occupation and the repression of the nationalist population in the Six Counties was the cause of the war. All casualties of the war, therefore, must be laid at the feet of British imperialism. By propping up a statelet based on repression, Britain guarantees resistance to that repression. HOI! unconditionally defends all forms of this resistance. We side with those who fight for this, and are opposed, right down the line, to those who prop up this repression. There is no middle ground: you are either for the IRA or the British army. The "peaceful settlement" that Dykes professed to want is a settlement of the oppressor, brought about by a boot on the neck of the Irish people. The only just peace, we argued, was one that liberated Ireland. We lost the motion, which, given the level of consciousness of British people about the Irish war, is not surprising. But it was by a narrow margin, and new contacts were made for HOI!, including some who had spoken out against us in the course of the meeting.

EASTER MARCH

In April 1990, HOI! organised its first annual commemoration of the Easter Rising of 1916, in which revolutionary socialist and republican forces in Dublin rose up against British imperialism. The Rising represented the first instance of carrying out the call of the Russian revolutionary, Lenin, to "turn the imperialist war into civil war". It also ushered in a whole revolutionary period in Ireland, which was only to be quelled in 1923. HOI! will be marching in London on Saturday April 20, 1991 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Rising, not only to remember those who fought, but also to take the question of Irish freedom to the heart of the working class in Britain today. Contact HOI! for further details, sponsorship letters, etc. Take the streets for Irish liberation!



WORKERS THEATRE

WTM has consistently supported HOI! and the struggle for Irish liberation. The sketch "Twenty Years", with the call "For the IRA, against the British army!" was performed to over 10,000 people on demonstrations and at meetings last year. WTM will be working hard to build for the march on April 20, 1991. It will also be marking the tenth anniversary of the heroic Hunger Strikes with readings of all the poems and prose of Bobby Sands on April 4, 1991. That date is the tenth anniversary of his election as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone. WTM wants to hear from all those interested in its work, and is always looking for new members. Contact WTM, Box 928, London, WC1N 3XX or ring Tam on 071-431 3135.

Captain's Log, Star Date...?



Beam them up, Scotty

INCREDIBLY, the new Star Trek sci-fi series (not a patch on the original, in the view of this writer) has fallen foul of the media ban on pro-Republican statements.

In an episode scheduled for

transmission in the next two years or so, a character remarks that the British Army had eventually pulled out of Ireland. Whether they left on the skids of their helicopters, as HOI! would like to see, or whether 'Time To Go' was right all along and they just got tired, was not made clear. (A pity really: a definitive message like this delivered from a denizen of the future would potentially save us all quite a lot of buggering about in the here and now).

The episode has already been shown, unedited, in the United States, but a spokesperson for the BBC warned that "[we are] mind-

ful of [our] responsibilities and ... will be examining the programme closer to the time of transmission", which sounds ominous.

That the media establishment is seriously thinking of censoring a light entertainment programme because of such an innocuous statement illustrates the lack of confidence British imperialism has in its position in the north of Ireland. HOI!, the Irish solidarity campaign which goes where no campaign has gone before, intends to turn their nightmare vision of the future into a reality.

Bones McCoy

HANDS OFF IRELAND!

Another Bloody Sunday

THE NORTH of Ireland at the beginning of the 1970s was politically shaken to its roots by the mass outbreak of anger from the nationalist population. The civil rights campaign ignited into a popular revolt.

In an attempt to behead this mass protest, the Stormont parliament introduced internment without trial. Rather than isolate the IRA, though, internment gave revolutionary republicanism a massive boost, its popular support growing as a reaction to repression. The masses came out on to the streets, which were patrolled by IRA units.

Following internment, all marches were banned, but civil rights groups continued to demonstrate illegally. The Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association called a protest demonstration for Sunday January 30, 1971, in the republican area of Derry. The marchers assembled at Creggan to go to Free Derry corner, where a rally was to be held.

As the march set off, the army kept their distance, seemingly happy to contain the protest within republican areas. Just as the march reached Free Derry corner, members of the First battalion of the Parachute Regiment drove into the area at high speed. Witnesses later told how the Paras blocked all escape routes, and all their vehicles seemed to know exactly where to park. Only one vehicle stopped in the wrong place, but quickly altered its position. For a regiment which had never visited Derry, they knew a great deal about the layout of the estates and surrounding streets.

Within minutes the Paras had opened fire on the defenceless crowd. Thirteen unarmed civilians



British 'peace-keepers' in action

lay dead; one more was to die later, and large number of others were wounded. Many of those killed had been shot in the back by the Paras while going to help others.

British lies

The army claimed that four of those killed were on its wanted list and that the IRA had fired first. Neither the Provisional nor Official IRA were on or near the march, partly as a result of being warned some weeks before that the authorities were planning a confrontation.

Following the massacre, Lord Justice Widgery was given the task of conducting an inquiry into the shootings. Widgery was a one-time senior army officer, and not surprisingly he supported the army's version of the events. The commanding officer on the day, Lieutenant Colonel Wilford, eventually got an OBE.

A sense of horror and anger gripped the Irish people following the killings. Over 20,000 followed the coffins of those murdered. In London, 20,000 Irish people and British anti-imperialists marched in

one of the most militant and angry protests the city had seen. The police attacked the march, making 150 arrests. Other protests erupted around the country. In the House of Commons, Irish MP Bernadette Devlin walked across the floor and punched the Home Secretary, Maudling, as he attempted to defend Britain's butchery.

In the USA, dockers boycotted British made goods - as they did when Bobby Sands died in 1981 - only to have their efforts undermined when British TUC general secretary Vic Feather arrived and persuaded them to drop this action. He was later thanked for his loyal support for British imperialism by prime minister Edward Heath. In the twenty-six Counties, strikes broke out and the government was pressurised to declare the day of the funerals a day of national mourning. A crowd of over 30,000 marched on the British embassy and burnt it down.

Gloves off

Following Bloody Sunday, the political climate changed. The kid

points than their own; which sidesteps raising the demand for troops out now, and also evades any consistent work to take this argument to wider forces.

However, just because the organisers of the demo do no more than go through the motions of solidarity - the Committee for British Withdrawal From Ireland 'mobilising' leaflet does not even have a time on it - we do not believe that we should 'like it', or 'lump it' and stay at home. Bloody Sunday was a turning point for the struggle against British occupation; it can become so again. The 'official' forces represent a block on this. To be more correct, it is not so much *them* as individuals, but their perspectives. A direct, organisational counterposition of our perspectives is necessary to build our militant anti-imperialist alternative. Also, active intervention is the best and most successful way of addressing those who are mobilised around Irish solidarity already, and of drawing in new forces.

March in London on January 26: make Ireland Britain's Vietnam!

Mick Kelly

MARCH!

Join the Hands Off Ireland! contingent on the Bloody Sunday march
Assemble: Hyde Park, London; 1pm, Saturday January 26 1991

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